


1996

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With 20 new faces, WKU baseball looks to join trend

By JASON FRANKS

The Daily News
Probably more than any other sport, baseball coaches seek trend. During the past offseason, Joel Murrie noticed a trend in the Sun Belt Conference.

The six teams that advanced to last season's conference tournament were the top six teams in the conference in both fielding and pitching.

"We were second in the league in hitting, but we finished dead last," the Western Kentucky University head coach said.

The result is a revamped roster that includes 11 new pitchers and a new starting defense up the middle heading into Friday's season opener at No. 1-ranked Louisiana State.

In fact, new seems to be the buzzword around this team. New attitude, new roster and new goals. Of the 29 players, only nine wore the Hilltopper uniform last season.

"We haven't had any problems, though," said left fielder Chad Chabala, one of the nine returnees. "We all get along real well on and off the field. This year's team is not just good ball players but good people, too. We're trying to bring that on the field."

That family feeling seemed to be missing from last year's team that finished 21-35. While center fielder Carlos Atkins and catcher James Davis were integral parts of last year's team and were both selected in last summer's amateur draft, Murrie said those kinds of distractions may have had adverse effects on the team.

He hopes the lack of stars on this year's team has the reverse effect.

"Almost to the man, these kids believe in this program," Murrie said. "They understand the things they need to do to win. They aren't just here for two hours a day to play, but they're doing the things 24 hours a day that need to be done."

"There are no egos on this team. This is a team of no stars. None of them are worried about



WESTERN KENTUCKY third baseman Josh Patton is one of nine returning players from last year's team that finished 21-35 and in last place of the Sun Belt

Conference. With 20 new players on the roster, Western opens its season Friday at No. 1-ranked Louisiana State.

Staff Photo by Wales Hunter

what they need to do to go to the majors or win individual awards. They're here to do the things it takes to win."

For the Hilltoppers to win they will have to improve on their dismal pitching of last season. Western finished last in the conference in team ERA at 6.44.

Here's a position-by-position look at this year's team. Statistics in parentheses are from last season.

Infield

Senior first baseman Shannon McKenzie (.342, 2 HR, 28 RBI) and junior third baseman Josh Patton (.321, 4 HR, 57 RBI) provide Murrie with a pair of experienced players on the corners.

McKenzie is the Hilltoppers' leading returning hitter and committed only five errors while

starting all but one game last season. Patton was listed as a "Player to Watch" from the Sun Belt Conference by Collegiate Baseball.

With John Moffett moving from shortstop to the outfield and Brian Laubert graduating, Murrie had to find newcomers to fill his two middle infield spots.

Freshman Matt Jett will get the start at second base while junior-college transfer Dan Gite will start at shortstop. Junior Scott Flynn slices up the middle infield.

"The whole key to our team will be what we do on the mound and our defense up the middle," Murrie said. "Those are the two things we had the most trouble with last year. Now, we feel good about our infield defense. We've got some guys up the middle who can make the hard plays look

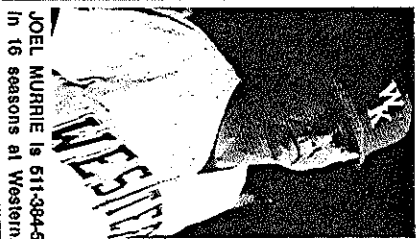
Catcher

With the departure of Davis, who started behind the plate for four seasons, Murrie brought in five newcomers to fight for the open spot.

Erick Roza, a native of Puerto Rico, will get the starting nod after transferring from Indian Hills College in Centerville, Iowa.

Andrew Fritts, a transfer from the University of Tampa, will also see time behind the plate and will start Friday as Western's designated hitter. Steve Matzura, who transferred from perennial national power Miami, may be the best prospect, Murrie said.

"He just came here in January, and he's taking some time to learn our system," Murrie said. "He'll be an impact player for us in the



JOEL MURRIE is 511-384-5 in 16 seasons at Western.



HEAD COACH: Joel Murrie (Florida, '75) 511-384-5 in 16 years at Western.
ASSISTANT COACHES: Dan Mottler (WKU, '83), Jerry Williams (Sam Houston State, '83), Keith Chisewy (South Carolina-Spartanburg, '83)
HOME FIELD: Nick Dumas Field (1,050)
Dimensions: LF-330; CF-370; RF-370; RC-370; RF-370.
1995 RECORD: 21-35 overall, 6-21 Sun Belt Conference.
CONFERENCE FINISH: 10th of 10 last season.
STARTERS RETURNING: 1097; 614 NEWCOMERS: 20
ALL-TIME RECORD: 1,112-876-16 (359)

TOP RETURNERS

Position Player
S. McKenzie, 1B, Sr., .342, 2 HR, 28 RBI
Chad Chabala, LF, Sr., .321, 4 HR, 57 RBI
John Patton, 3B, Jr., .321, 4 HR, 57 RBI
Mike Popko, RF, Sr., .255, 9 HR, 19 RBI
John Mottler, SS, Jr., .206, 2 HR, 9 RBI
Pitchers
C.J. Barron, RHP, Sr., 4.6, 6.54 ERA, 46 K
C. Macken, LHP, Sr., 7.2, 7.29 ERA, 14 K
Drew Fritts, RHP, Sr., 2.9, 6.28 ERA, 21 K

TOP NEWCOMERS

Position Player
Erick Roza, C, Jr., .309, 14 RBI
Matt Jett, 2B, Jr., .450, 50 RBI, 55 SB
Dan O'Leary, SS, Jr., .328, 20 RBI
Mike Wegow, CF, Jr., .400, 5 HR
Andrew Fritts, DHC, Sr., .197, 2 HR, 14 RBI
Ken Matzura, 1B, Jr., .345
Pitchers
Scott Flynn, RHP, Jr., 5.2
T.J. Freeman, UHP, Jr., 9.2, 121 ERA, 119 K

future." 2-15-96 D

Outfield

One of Western's most consistent players last season, Chabala left field for his senior year.

Freshman Michael Wagner will look to fill Atkins' shoes in center field, while Mike Popko (.258, 3 HR, 19 RBI) and Moffett (.206, 2 HR, 9 RBI) will platoon in right field.

Moffett will get the start Friday as Popko continues to recover from a fractured rib. Murrie said Popko is at about 80 percent.

Pitching

Long the Achilles' heel of Western's baseball program, Murrie hopes a crop of 11 newcomers will heat the pitching staff.

"In the fall of 1994, we had one pitcher who was throwing over 85 (mph)," Murrie said. "This last fall, we had seven throwing over 85. Velocity isn't everything, but it sure is nice to have."

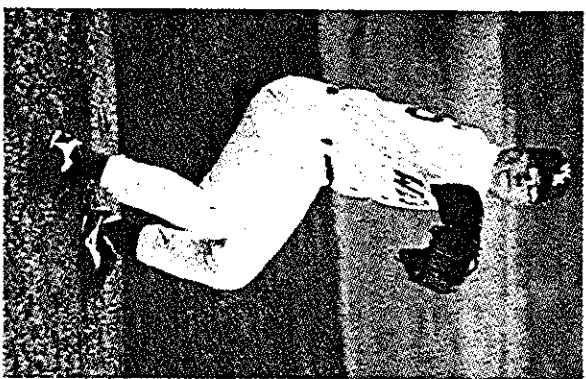
Murrie is happy to have Joe Penneritz, a transfer from Waldorf Junior College in Iowa who will start Friday's opener.

Penneritz knows the history of Western's pitching staff.

"In the past they've had some trouble here with their pitching," Penneritz said. "We've made it a goal to have the top pitching team in the conference this year and for one of us to have the best ERA in the conference."

T.J. Freeman, a member of last year's Bowling Green High state runner-up squad, will start Saturday's contest.

WKU baseball to open at No. 1 LSU



WKU vs. LSU

SITE: Alex Box Stadium (6,800), Baton Rouge, La.

RECORDS: WKU (0-0); LSU (0-0).

GAME TIMES: Friday, 7 p.m.; Saturday, 2 p.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m.

SERIES: First meeting.

COACHES: Joel Murrie (Western), 511-384-5 in 16 seasons at Western; Skip Bertman (LSU), 576-220-1 in 12 seasons at LSU.

STARTING PITCHERS: Friday - Joe Pennertiz (WKU, Jr., RH) vs. Eddie Yarnall (LSU, Jr., LH); Saturday - T.J. Freeman (WKU, Fr., LH) vs. Joey Palnich (LSU, Jr., RH); Sunday - Christian Blackburn (WKU, Sr., LH) vs. Jake Esteves (LSU, Jr., RH).

RADIO: WBGN-AM; Friday (live, 7 p.m.); Saturday (joined in progress, 1 p.m.); Sunday (none).

COMMENTATOR: Todd Hamilton.

SENIOR Christian Blackburn is expected to start Sunday.

WKU PROBABLE STARTERS

C-Erick Rosa, Jr., 309, 14 RBI
1B-S. McKenzie, Sr., 342, 2 HR, 28 RBI
2B-Matt Idlett, Fr., 450, 50 RBI, 50 SB
SS-Dan Grace, Jr., 328, 20 RBI
3B-Josh Patton, Jr., 321, 4 HR, 57 RBI
LF-Chad Chabala, Sr., 324, 2 HR, 36 RBI
CF-Michael Wagner, Fr., 430, 5 HR
RF-John Moffatt, Jr., 206, 2 HR, 9 RBI
DH-Andres Prida, So., 197, 2 HR, 14 RBI
Note: Stats are from last season.

LSU PROBABLE STARTERS

C-Tim Lander, Sr., 250, 4 HR, 26 RBI
1B-Eddy Furniss, So., 326, 9 HR, 52 RBI
2B-Warren Morris, Jr., 389, 8 HR, 50 RBI
SS-Jason Williams, Sr., 315, 10 HR, 47 RBI
3B-Nathan Dunn, Jr., 303, 15 HR, 50 RBI
LF-Chad Cooley, Sr., 308, 7 HR, 61 RBI
CF-Mike Koerner, So., 294, 6 HR, 33 RBI
RF-Justin Boywes, Sr., 278, 6 HR, 37 RBI
DH-Tom Bernhardt, Jr., 137, 2 HR, 8 RBI
Note: Stats are from last season.

By JASON FRANKS
2-16-91
D.V.
The Daily News

In 16 years as Western Kentucky University's baseball coach, Joel Murrie is not sure he has ever seen this kind of hype.

"I've received more calls from Baton Rouge this week than I ever get around here," Murrie said. "We're definitely going to a place where this means a lot."

Western, which finished 21-35 last season, opens its 78th season of baseball tonight at 7 at Louisiana State in Baton Rouge, La. The contest is the first of a three-game series that continues Saturday at 2 p.m. and concludes Sunday at 1 p.m. WBGN-AM will broadcast tonight's game live and join Saturday's game in progress.

The Tigers, who won the College World Series in 1991 and 1993, are one publication's pick to win it again this season. Baseball America picked LSU as its preseason No. 1 team in the country. Collegiate Baseball ranked the Tigers No. 3. LSU finished 47-18 last year and advanced to the semifinals of the NCAA Tournament's South Regional.

"They return more experienced players than Coach (Skip) Bertman has ever had since he's been at LSU," Murrie said.

Bartman, who will coach the U.S. Olympic baseball team this summer, has two players who may join him in Atlanta. Second baseman Warren Morris led the Tigers in hitting last season with a .369 clip and added eight home runs and 50 RBI.

Eddie Yarnall, who will start tonight's season opener for both teams, is also an Olympic hopeful. Yarnall was 5-0 last season with a 3.45 ERA and 87 strikeouts.

Joe Pennertiz, a transfer from Waldorf Junior College in Iowa, will start on the mound for the Hilltoppers tonight and looks forward to the opportunity.

"I've heard the fans down there get on the other players a little bit," Pennertiz said. "That just makes it more fun, I think. This is definitely the chance of a lifetime."

Murrie agrees.

"I called them and asked if they wanted to play three games to open the season," he said. "They were very happy. They kept asking if we wanted to play four, five or six games. I told them three would be enough."

"But what do we have to lose? They may be the best team in the country, and we're far from that point. But we're going to go down there and find out where we stand right away and go from there."

LSU bangs seven homers, routs WKU

2-18-96 DN

By The Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — LSU batters banged a school record-tying seven home runs and three pitchers collaborated on a nine-hitter Saturday as the No. 1-ranked Tigers beat Western Kentucky, 18-0.

LSU beat Western Kentucky, 9-0, in Friday night's season opener for each team and they wrap up a three-game weekend series on Sunday.

Justin Bowles, who homered twice and went 4-for-4 in Friday night's game, got his sixth consecutive hit and third home run of the young season in the third to extend LSU's lead to 8-0. He was 2-for-4 on Saturday, also adding a double.

Back-to-back home runs by pinch-hitters Jeramie Moore, who had a two-run shot, and Brad Wilson upped the score to 13-0 in the sixth inning before the Tigers closed out the scoring with five more runs in the seventh.

Other LSU homers came from Nathan Dunn, Chad Cooley, Tom Bernhardt and Mike Koerner.

Junior college transfer Joey Painich pitched six strong innings for the victory, scattering seven hits and striking out five Western Kentucky batters over six innings. Brett Laxton relieved Painich in the seventh, allowing only one hit and striking out four in two innings. Brian Daugherty allowed one hit

and struck out one in the ninth to close it.

Christian Blackburn (0-1), the first of four Western Kentucky pitchers, got the loss. He lasted just two innings, surrendered seven of LSU's 19 hits, struck out two and walked one.

Friday's game

Jason Bowles had two doubles, two homers and drove in six runs to back up LSU's one-hit pitching Friday night as the top-ranked Tigers beat Western Kentucky, 9-0, in the season opener for each team.

Eddie Yarnall pitched six strong innings, striking out nine and giving up a single to Western Kentucky's Josh Patton in the first inning, to pick up the win. Jason Albritton pitched two hitless innings and Chris Demouy closed out the ninth for LSU.

LSU, meanwhile, scored four runs in the first inning, two more in the fourth and three more in the fifth.

Western's bayou blues continue in 18-1 rout

A Daily News report

No. 1-ranked Louisiana State continued its dominance over Western Kentucky's baseball team Sunday, slaughtering the Hilltoppers 18-1 at Alan Box Stadium in Baton Rouge, La.

The Tigers outscored Western 45-1 in the three-game series.

Louisiana State built a 2-0 lead after three innings and broke the game open in the fourth with eight runs. First baseman Eddy Furniss led the Tigers' hitting barrage with a single, two doubles and three RBI. Shortstop Jason Williams and outfielder Chad Cooley each added three hits and two RBI.

Western scored its first run of the season on an RBI single by outfielder Chad Chabala in the fifth inning. Third baseman Josh Patton added two hits for the

Hilltoppers. 2-19-96 DN

Jake Esteves (1-0) got the win for the Tigers (3-0), striking out 11 and allowing five hits in five innings. C.J. Martin (0-1) took the loss for Western (0-3) after allowing five runs in three-plus innings. Western pitchers hit five LSU batters in the contest.

Western returns to action this weekend with a three-game series against Wofford in Spartanburg, S.C. The teams will play a doubleheader Saturday beginning at noon and will wrap up the series with a single game Sunday at noon. Western opens its home season March 2 with a doubleheader against Marshall.

Western	000 010 000—1 6 1
Louisiana State	101 814 30x—18 16 1
WP — Esteves (1-0), LP — Martin (0-1), 2B — Furniss	
(2), Dunn, Cooley (LSU); Grice (Western), 3B — Wilson,	
Bernhardt (LSU), HR — Williams (LSU).	

Saturday's games

3-4-96 DN

Western split its home-opening doubleheader Saturday, falling 12-4 in the opener before winning 9-5 in the nightcap.

In the first game, the Thundering Herd broke open a one-all tie in the sixth inning with five runs off reliever Joe Pennertz, who fell to 1-2 with the loss.

Mike Hagy led the Marshall attack with a home run and four RBI. J.R. Watts (1-1) got the win for Marshall, allowing seven hits and two runs in eight innings.

Chabala, Patton and Mike Wagner paced Western with two hits apiece.

In the nightcap, Western scored six runs in the third inning to break the game open. A two-RBI double by Erick Rosa and a two-RBI triple by Wagner were the big blows in the inning.

Andres Prida added three hits and three RBI for Western, and Idlett hit his first home run in a Hilltopper uniform.

Josh Novatney (1-1) got the win for Western, allowing four runs (two earned) in five innings of work.

GAME ONE

Marshall 001 005 231-12 11 1

Western 001 001 002- 4 9 2

WP — Watts (1-1). LP — Pennertz (1-2). 2B — Bailou, Williams (Marshall); Patton, Wagner (Western). HR — Hagy, Maestro (Marshall).

GAME TWO

Marshall 002 021 0- 5 7 0

Western 018 011 x- 9 10 1

WP — Novatney (1-1). LP — Mohr (0-1). 2B — Bailou, Roush (Marshall); Martin, Prida, Rosa (Western). 3B — Wagner (Western). HR — Idlett (Western).

Ten-run fourth inning keys Tops in 22-6 rout of visiting Marshall

Western Kentucky University's baseball team plated ten runs in the fourth inning Sunday and went on to crush Marshall 22-6 at Nick Denes Field in the rubber game of a three-game series.

Already leading 6-0, Western sent 14 batters to the plate in the fourth and collected six hits and five walks. Shannon McKenzie dealt the big blows in the inning — a two-RBI double with no outs and a three-RBI double with two outs.

Mike Sopko was 4-for-6 with a home run, five RBI and four runs scored, and Matt Idlett and Josh Patton both added two hits and three RBI.

Steve Stemle (2-0) got the win for Western (4-5), pitching five scoreless innings and striking out three. Marshall fell to 1-6 with the loss.

Western travels to Tennessee Tech on Wednesday for a 2 p.m. game.

Marshall 000 005 010— 6 8 2
Western 402 (10)33 00x—22 17 2
WP — Stemle (2-0), LP — Mallory (0-1), 2B — Greene
(Marshall): Martin, McKenzie (2) (Western), HR — Sopko
(Western).

3-4-96DN

Martin's home run paces Hilltoppers

A Daily News report
3-11-96 DN

Designated hitter C.J. Martin's three-run home run in the top of the ninth inning lifted Western Kentucky University's baseball team to a 5-4 win over Louisiana Tech on Sunday at J.C. Love Field in Ruston, La.

With the win, Western (7-5, 3-0 Sun Belt Conference) swept the Bulldogs (8-10, 0-3) in the first Sun Belt Conference series of the season for both teams.

With Western trailing 4-2 headed

into the final inning, Erick Rosa knocked a one-out double and Shannon McKenzie moved Rosa to third with a single. Martin followed with his fourth home run of the season and his second of the game.

Martin, who has also pitched in two games for the Hilltoppers, is batting .520 this season with 11 RBIs, 10 runs scored and a 1.160 slugging percentage.

Western opened the scoring in the second inning with a two-run home run by Martin, who finished the game 2-for-5 with two runs and five

RBI. The Bulldogs answered with two runs in the third and single runs in the fifth and seventh.

Reliever Brian Smith pitched two scoreless innings and got the win for Western. Rosa and Mike Sopko added two hits apiece for the Hilltoppers.

Western hosts Indiana Tech at 3 p.m. Tuesday.

Western	.....	020	000	003	-	5	8	0
Louisiana Tech	.....	002	010	100	-	4	8	0
WP - Smith, LP - Oct. 28 - Rosa 2 (Western); Hurst, Loy (Louisiana Tech), HR - Martin 2 (Western), McElwain (Louisiana Tech).								

Martin honored 3-13-96 D.C.

Western's C.J. Martin has been named the Wilson Sun Belt Conference Player of the Week.

Martin hit .583 (7-for-12) with four home runs and 10 RBI during

Western's three-game sweep of Louisiana Tech last weekend. Martin leads the team in hitting (.520), RBI (11), home runs (four) and is second in doubles with four.

Freak play gives WKU win; Martin named Sun Belt's player of the week

3-13-96 DN

A Daily News report

Sometimes the ball bounces the right way.

Things have bounced right for Western Kentucky University's baseball team lately as the Hilltoppers have won six straight, including Tuesday's 13-12 victory over Indiana Tech at Nick Denes Field.

With the score tied at 12 and one out in the bottom of the ninth inning, Western's Shannon McKenzie was at third base representing the potential game-winning run. Mike Sopko hit a grounder down the third-base line that hit McKenzie's foot and bounced away from the Indiana Tech third baseman.

Since McKenzie was on the base, the ball was still live and McKenzie trotted home with the winning run.

The run capped a wild game that featured 25 runs, 24 hits and two big innings.

Trailing 3-2, the Hilltoppers (8-5) scored seven runs in the sixth. Andres Prida drove in two runs with a double, and Warriors pitchers walked two Hilltoppers in.

Western led 10-6 after eight innings before Indiana Tech rallied with six runs off four hits and one Western error to lead 12-10.

Matt Idlett got on base to open the bottom of the inning after being hit by a pitch, and Josh Patton followed with a single. McKenzie doubled Idlett and Patton home to tie the game and advanced to third on a single by T.J. Freeman. That set up Sopko's heroics.

Sopko was 2-for-4 with a home run and three RBI. Patton added three hits, and C.J. Martin knocked in three runs.

Western hosts Wisconsin-Milwaukee today at 3 p.m.

Indiana Tech 000 111 036-12 12 1
Western 000 207 013-13 12 3
WP -- Smith (2-0), LP -- Martinez (0-1), 2B -- Hoffman (Indiana Tech); Chabala, Martin, McKenzie, Prida (Western).
HR -- Reedy (Indiana Tech); Sopko (Western).

Idlett finds light pole; Tops find victory

3-14-96 DN

By JASON FRAKES
The Daily News

Off the pitcher's hand, off the bat, over the fence and off the light pole.

No, Western Kentucky's Matt Idlett did not call his shot at Nick Denes Field on Tuesday, but he will take it all the same.

With Western Kentucky University's baseball team trailing 7-6 in the bottom of the eighth inning of Tuesday's game with Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Idlett stepped to the plate with two outs and pinch-runner Mike Wagner standing at first base.

"I was just looking to drive the ball in the gap," the freshman shortstop said. "I was looking for a pitch I could drive so I could get the run in."

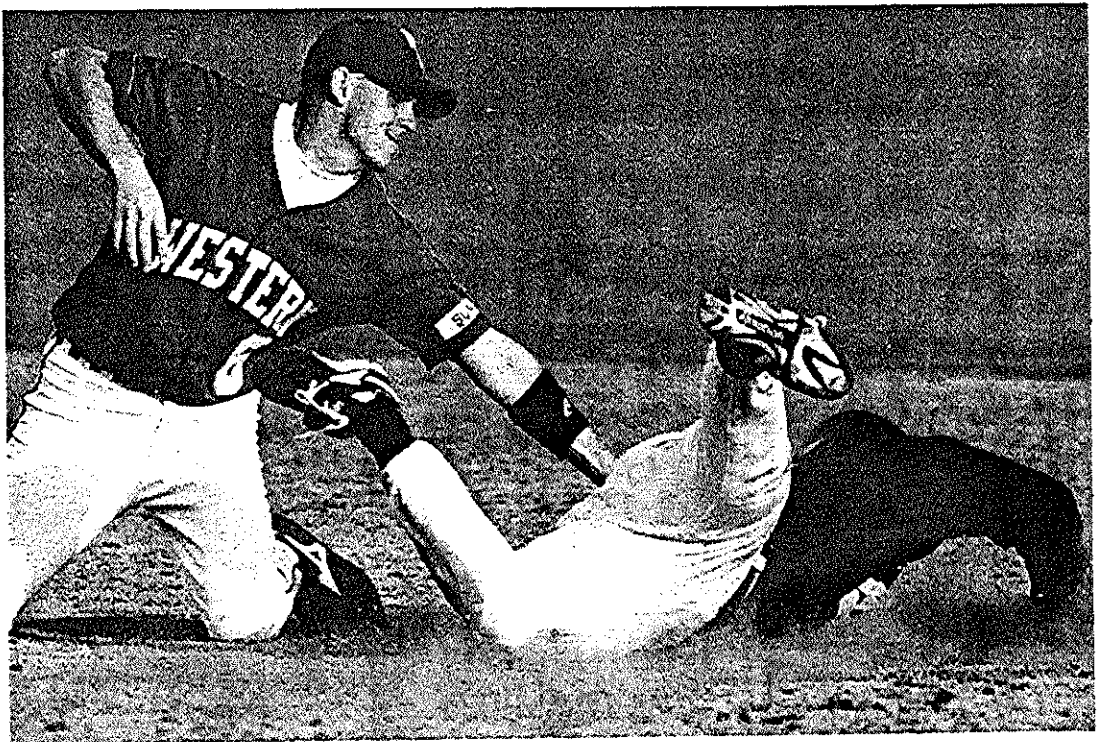
Idlett drove Wagner and himself in after crushing Jesse Kruser's 1-0 pitch over the left-field wall to cap Western's 8-7 come-from-behind victory. The ball clanged off the light pole past the left-field wall and dropped back on the field.

With the win, the Hilltoppers improved to 9-5 and won their seventh straight. The streak is Western's longest since the 1992 squad won nine straight midway through the season. Western is 9-2 after dropping three in a row to No. 1-ranked Louisiana State to open the season.

Western coach Joel Murrie said Idlett, whose home run was his third of the season, has been a big part of his team's success during the run.

"Matt's got a great future in front of him in this program," Murrie said. "You're not going to fool him many times."

Western has not been fooled at all lately in the final innings of



WESTERN'S Chad Chabala (left) makes the tag as the Hilltoppers rally to down Wisconsin-Milwaukee 8-7 on Wednesday at Denes Field.

Daily News/Joe Imel

games. The Hilltoppers' victory Tuesday was their sixth come-from-behind win of the season.

"I think it's in our attitude," Idlett said. "We don't ever quit. We don't want to have to come from behind every time, but that's the way it's been working lately."

Trailing 7-4 in the sixth inning, the Hilltoppers began their most recent comeback. Mike Flynn's sacrifice fly plated Bowling Green High School graduate T.J. Freeman to cut the Panthers' lead to 7-5.

In the seventh, Shannon

McKenzie sliced a two-out double down the right-field line to score Idlett and make the score 7-6.

Reliever Josh Novatney, who got the win and improved to 3-1, struck out the side in the top of the eighth to set up Idlett's heroics in the bottom of the inning.

After allowing two runners to reach base with two outs in the top of the ninth, Steve Stemle got his first save of the season by striking out Jason Wesemann to end the game. Wisconsin-Milwaukee dropped to 1-7.

Catcher Erick Rosa paced

Western with three hits and two RBI. Chad Chabala added three hits, and C.J. Martin hit his fifth home run of the season.

Western hosts Indiana Tech today at 3 p.m. before traveling to New Orleans this weekend for a three-game series with their Sun Belt Conference foes.

"We've made enormous steps since our opening weekend," Murrie said. "What we're striving for is perfection. We want to eventually go out and play the perfect game."

Toppers' win streak at eight

A Daily News report

Western Kentucky University's baseball team ran its win streak to eight Thursday, topping Indiana Tech for the second time this week, 5-1.

Western's win streak is the program's longest since the Hilltoppers won nine in a row in 1992.

Western (10-5) led 2-0 in the sixth inning, but Tech cut the lead in half in the seventh inning.

The Hilltoppers added three runs in the bottom of the seventh, with Chad Chabala, C.J. Martin and Shannon McKenzie posting RBIs.

Martin extended his hitting streak to nine games with two hits. He also stole two bases. He has 16 hits in 28 atbats this season with 17 RBI.

Chad Mead (1-0) got the win for Western, retiring 10 straight Warriors between the first and fourth innings. He allowed five hits and struck out two batters.

The Hilltoppers go on the road this weekend to play New Orleans in a three-game Sun Belt Conference series. The Privateers are ranked 26th nationally by Collegiate Baseball.

The series starts with a dou-

bleheader Saturday at 1 p.m. Sunday's game also starts at 1 p.m.

Western is 3-0 in Sun Belt play after sweeping Louisiana Tech on the road last weekend.

Indiana Tech 000 000 100-1 7 3
Western Kentucky 001 001 30x-5 9 1
WP-Mead (1-0). LP-Gonzales (1-1). 2B-(Western) Chabala.



New Orleans sweep stops Hilltopper streak at eight

3-17-76 DN

A Daily News report

NEW ORLEANS — The streak is over.

Western Kentucky University's baseball team, which had won eight games in a row, dropped a pair Saturday at Sun Belt Conference foe New Orleans.

The Privateers, ranked 26th in the nation by Collegiate Baseball, won 19-8 in the first game and followed with a 7-5 victory in the nightcap at Privateer Park.

In the opener, New Orleans roughed up Western starter Josh Novatney for seven runs in the first three innings. Western got to within 10-6 with five runs in the sixth, but New Orleans answered with six runs in the bottom of the inning.

The Privateers finished with 20 hits against five Western pitchers. Novatney fell to 3-2 with the loss. Steve Stanson (2-1) picked up the win for New Orleans.

C.J. Martin continued his torrid pace with a home run and three RBI for Western. Erick Rosa and Dan Grice added two hits apiece, and Chad Chabala knocked a home run.

Vinny Lamia paced New Orleans with two home runs, four runs scored and five RBI.

In the nightcap, New Orleans again jumped out to an early lead, scoring five runs in the first three innings against starter Steve Stemle.

Western rallied to tie the game with two runs in the fourth and three in the fifth. New Orleans got two runs in the bottom of the fifth to seal the victory.

Winning pitcher Keane Poche improved to 3-0 while Stemle fell to 3-1.

Martin again led Western at the plate with two hits, including his seventh home run of the season, and three RBI. Chabala also hit his second home run of the day.

Miguel Rivera and Scott Carson both had two hits and two RBI for the Privateers.

New Orleans (16-3) will host Western (10-7, 3-2 Sun Belt) today at 1 p.m.

WP — Steve Stanson (2-1). LP — Josh Novatney (3-2).
2B — Flynn, Patton, Rosa (Western); Avans (2), Cabeceiras, Hecard (New Orleans). 3B — Cueto, Powell (New Orleans). HR — Chabala, Martin (Western), Cueto, Lamia (2) (New Orleans).

GAME TWO

Western 000 230 0— 5 7 2
New Orleans 221 020 x— 7 9 3
WP — Keane Poche (3-0). LP — Steve Stemle (3-1). 2B — Carson (New Orleans). HR — Chabala, Martin (Western); Rivera, Carson (New Orleans).

GAME ONE

Western 000 105 020— 8 12 1
New Orleans 421 036 12x—19 20 0

Western baseball loses 5-3

3-15-96 DN

A Daily News report

NEW ORLEANS — Aided by three walks, a wild pitch and an error, New Orleans scored four runs in the seventh inning and went on to beat Western Kentucky 5-3 in Sun Belt Conference baseball action Sunday at Privateer Park.

With Western leading 2-1, the Privateers scored two earned runs off Western starter Joe Pennertz in the bottom of the seventh to take a 3-2 lead.

Then, the wheels fell off.

Reliever Brian Smith threw a wild pitch and walked two batters to load the bases with two outs. Felix Martinez then reached base on an error by Western third baseman Josh Patton that allowed pinch-runner Shad Renick to score.

Christian Blackburn relieved Smith and walked Jim Cueto, allowing another runner to score. Blackburn struck out Joe DiSalvo to end the ending but not before the Privateers had taken a 5-2 lead.

The Hilltoppers (10-8, 3-3 Sun Belt) scored a run in the ninth on a triple by Mike Wagner and an RBI groundout by Matt Idlett but could get no closer than the final margin.

Scott Carson led New Orleans (17-3, 6-0) with three hits and an RBI.

Western 001 010 001— 3 7 2
New Orleans 000 001 40x— 5 9 0
WP — Faust (2-1), LP — Pennertz (1-3), 2B —
Chabala (Western); Carson (New Orleans), 3B —
Wagner (Western); Rivera (New Orleans).

WKU baseball loses home tilt

A Daily News report

Southwestern Louisiana's Ian Methvin scattered seven hits over nine innings and held Western Kentucky University to two runs as the Ragin' Cajuns beat the Hilltoppers 7-2 in a Sun Belt Conference tilt at Nick Denes Field on Saturday.

Methvin struck out eight and walked four as he improved to 2-1 on the season. Southwestern Louisiana is now 11-14 and 3-4 in the Sun Belt. The Hilltoppers dropped to 10-9 and 3-4 after losing their fourth straight game.

The Ragin' Cajuns put the game away early, scoring single runs in the first three innings and adding three in the fourth. All six runs came off Western starter Joe Pennertz, who fell to 1-4 with the loss. Only two of the six were earned as Western committed two errors in the first four innings.

Western got on the board in the fifth on an RBI groundout by Dan Grice, but the Ragin' Cajuns struck again in the eighth to regain their six-run lead.

Western will host Southwestern Louisiana today at noon in a doubleheader.

Southwestern La. 111 300 010— 7 11 0
Western 000 010 001— 2 7 3
WP — Ian Methvin (2-1), LP — Joe Pennertz (1-4),
2B — May, Calais, Aguirre (Southwestern La.); Martin
(Western), 3B — Venetis (Western), HR — McClure
(Southwestern La.).

Western baseball splits DH

3-25-96
on

A Daily News report

In a park known for its high scoring games, pitching took center stage at Nick Denes Field on Sunday.

Western Kentucky University's baseball team split its doubleheader with Sun Belt Conference foe Southwestern Louisiana, winning the first game 7-1 before falling 2-0 in the nightcap.

In the opener, Stephen Stemle scattered six hits over six innings, striking out five and giving up one unearned run. He got the offensive help he needed in the bottom of the inning to earn his fourth victory of the season.

C.J. Martin led off the inning with a double and moved to third on Erick Rosa's sacrifice bunt. Shannon McKenzie squeezed Martin home to tie the score at one. The Hilltoppers went on to load the bases with two outs, and McKenzie scored on a balk to give Western a 2-1 lead.

Western, which pounded 15 hits during the contest, went on to score four runs in the eighth to secure the win. Andres Prida's two-run home run, his first as a Hilltopper, highlighted the rally.

Brian Smith pitched three scoreless innings in relief of Stemle to earn his first save of the year. Josh Patton led Western at the plate with three hits. McKenzie, Matt Idlett and Chad Chabala each added two hits and an RBI.

Troy May, John McClure and Chris Venetis had two hits apiece for Southwestern Louisiana.

In the nightcap, Southwestern Louisiana's Cody Robbins and Western's Josh Novatney hooked up in a pitchers' duel with Robbins coming out the victor.

Western got eight hits in the seven-inning game but never pushed a run across the plate. Western left nine runners on base and failed to score with the bases loaded and one out in the fifth.

The Ragin' Cajuns (12-15, 4-5 Sun Belt) got the only run they would need in the second on a sacrifice fly by Kevin Cantrelle. Ian Calais' RBI groundout in the seventh provided the Ragin' Cajuns' second run.

Novatney fell to 3-3 on the season, giving up three hits and striking out four. Robbins improved to 2-4, walking two and striking out two in his seven innings of work.

Martin, who pushed his hitting streak to 15 games, led Western at the plate with two hits. Oswaldo Aguirre had two of Southwestern Louisiana's three hits.

Western (11-10, 4-5) travels to Eastern Kentucky on Tuesday for a 2 p.m. game and will play at Louisville on Wednesday at 2 p.m. Western returns home Saturday, hosting Sun Belt foe Arkansas-Little Rock in a doubleheader at 2 p.m.

GAME ONE
SW Louisiana 000 010 000— 1 7 0
Western 010 002 04x— 7 15 1
WP — Stephen Stemle (4-1), LP — J.B. Slaton (3-4).
Save — Brian Smith (1), 2B — May (SW Louisiana); Idlett,
Martin (Western), HR — Prida (Western).
GAME TWO
SW Louisiana 010 000 1— 2 3 2
Western 000 000 0— 0 8 1
WP — Cody Robbins (2-4), LP — Josh Novatney (3-3).
2B — Patton (Western).

EKU relievers shut down Western for 6-5 victory

3-27-96 DC

A Daily News report

RICHMOND, Ky. — Eastern Kentucky University relievers Pat Friend and Joe Witten combined to hold Western Kentucky hitless during the final three innings, and the Colonels held on for a 6-5 win Tuesday at Turkey Hughes Field.

The teams traded single runs in the second and both scored two runs in the third before Eastern Kentucky took a 5-4 lead with two in the fifth. The Hilltoppers (11-11) tied the game in the sixth, but the Colonels regained control with a single run in the bottom of the inning.

Friend and Witten dominated the rest of the way. Friend struck out two before giving way to Witten with one out in the eighth. Witten walked one batter but held the lead in earning his third save of the year.

Jason Estep got his first win of the year for the Colonels. Christian Blackburn fell to 0-2 with the loss as Western lost for the sixth time in its last seven games.

Matt Idlett led Western at the plate with two hits, including a triple. Shannon McKenzie added a home run and two RBI. Ted Elliott had two hits and three RBI for Eastern Kentucky (8-14).

Western returns to action today in a 2 p.m. contest at Louisville.

Western Ky. 012 011 000— 5 7 1
Eastern Ky. 012 021 00x— 6 12 2

WP — Jason Estep (1-0). LP — Christian Blackburn (0-2).
Save — Joe Witten (3). 2B — Berger, Adkins, Elliott (Eastern). 3B — Idlett (Western). HR — McKenzie (Western).

Martin big stick as Tops rout U of L ³⁻²⁸⁻⁹⁶ _{DN}

A Daily News report
Maybe the only way to stop C.J. Martin is to get him on the mound.

The Western Kentucky University designated hitter pounded three doubles and a home run and knocked in four runs to lead the Hilltoppers to a 17-3 thrashing of Louisville on Wednesday at Derby City Field.

Martin extended his hitting streak to 17 games and raised his team leading batting average 17 points to .485. His three doubles gave him 10 on the year and his home run was his eighth. Both are team highs. Martin also leads the team in RBI with 28 and slugging percentage (.985)

Martin is seven games shy of tying Bill Weyers' school record 24-game hitting streak set in 1993.

Martin's only low point came in the third inning when he relieved Western starting pitcher Stephen Stemle. Martin was roughed up for three runs (two earned) before Joe Pennertz relieved him.

Louisville's three runs cut Western's lead to 6-3, but the Hilltoppers got plenty of offense the rest of the way, scoring twice in the fourth before getting four runs in both the fifth and sixth innings.

Western (12-11) tied its season high with 17 hits, including seven doubles, two triples and three home runs.

Stemle improved to 5-1 with the win as six Western pitchers held the Cardinals (10-13) to five hits.

Chad Chabala added a triple, a home run and five RBI during the Western hit parade. Josh Patton pounded three hits and knocked in two runs.

Western begins a three-game Sun Belt Conference series Saturday with a doubleheader against Arkansas-Little Rock at 2 p.m. The teams will play a single game Sunday at 1 p.m.

Western 321 244 001-17 17 0
Louisville 003 000 000- 3 5 3
WP -- Stephen Stemle (5-1). LP -- Eric Findley (3-4). 2B -- Flynn, Idlett, Martin (3), Patton (2) (Western); Weidemann (Louisville). 3B -- Chabala, Idlett (Western). HR -- Chabala, Martin, McKenzie (Western).

Tops face Cats today after Sunday rainout; WKU men's tennis now 7-3

By the Daily News 4-1-96 DN

Western Kentucky University's baseball team's game Sunday with Sun Belt Conference foe Arkansas-Little Rock was rained out.

No make-up date has been set. The two teams split their doubleheader Saturday at Nick Denes Field.

Western (13-12, 5-6 Sun Belt Conference) will host Kentucky today at 4 p.m.

WKU's Martin hits for cycle

By JASON FRANKS 4-3-96 DN
The Daily News

While his opponents may have been occupied with a certain basketball game, Western Kentucky University's C.J. Martin had other things on his mind Monday night.

Like starting another streak. Martin had his 18-game hitting run snapped in Saturday's 10-1 loss to Arkansas-Little Rock in the second game of a doubleheader.

Monday the senior designated hitter hit for the cycle, including a grand-slam home run, and the Hilltoppers outslugged Kentucky 17-16 at Nick Denes Field.

"I just tried to do what I could do to help the team," Martin said. "As a designated hitter, you're supposed to help produce some runs. On Saturday, I let the team down during a conference series that we needed to win."

Martin did not let the Hilltoppers (14-12) down Monday. He finished 4-for-5, knocking in five runs and scoring one. Martin is hitting .469 this season with nine home runs and 34 RBIs. His holds a .963 slugging percentage and has Hilltopper coach Joel Murrie reminiscing about a former Western Kentucky University star.

"I wouldn't pitch to him," Murrie said of Martin. "I don't care what the situation is, I wouldn't pitch to him. It kind of reminds me of what Chris Turner (now in the

California Angels organization) was doing here one season. I remember when Old Dominion walked him five times in one game during the conference tournament. They weren't going to let him beat them."

And while Martin did his best to do it single-handedly, he did not beat Kentucky by himself. After a game that featured 33 runs, 34 hits and five home runs, the outcome finally came down to a soft chopper to Kentucky shortstop Kenny Miller.

With the game tied at 16, Shannon McKenzie led off the bottom of the ninth with a sharp single up the middle off hard-throwing Kentucky reliever Adam Milburn. Matt Idlett sacrificed McKenzie to second, and Mike Wagner was sent in to pinch run for McKenzie.

Mike Sopko drew an intentional walk, and Wagner went to third when Milburn's fourth ball sailed over catcher Todd Young's head. That forced the Wildcats (16-12) to walk Dan Grice, and Western had the bases loaded with one out.

Milburn struck out Scott Flynn to put the pressure on Western's Chad Chabala.

"He was throwing some nasty stuff out there," Chabala said of Milburn. "I was just trying to make contact. He got two strikes on the previous hitter and came in on him. I knew that and just tried to put the ball in play."

With a 1-2 count, Chabala hit a

high chopper to Miller, who rushed his throw to first base. The throw got past first baseman Pete Pryor and allowed Wagner to score the winning run from third base.

Kentucky coach Keith Madison was quick to pick up his freshman shortstop.

"He just made a mental mistake because he was playing too far back on that play," Madison said. "But he's an excellent shortstop for a freshman. He's going to be one of the best we've ever had here."

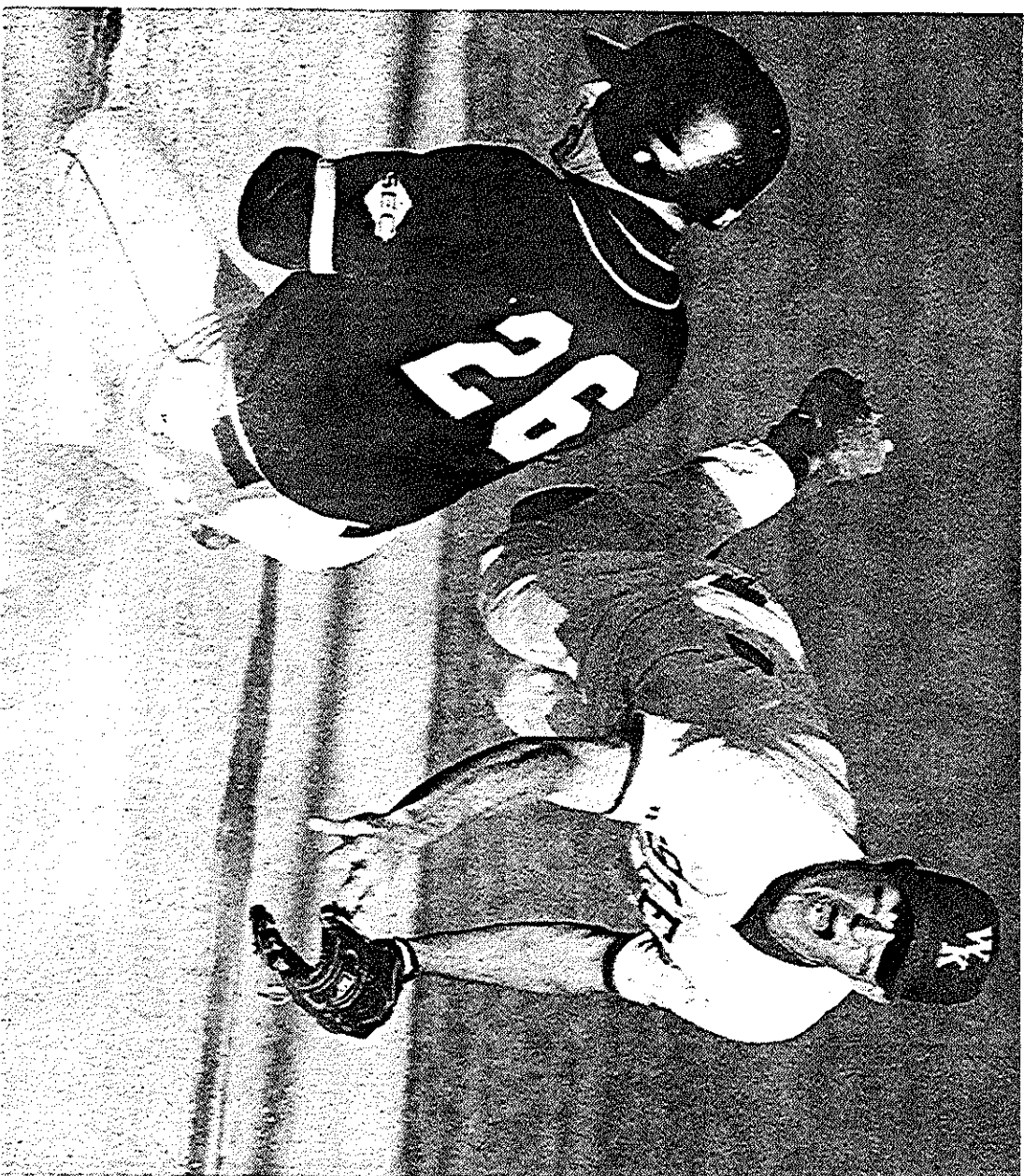
The final play capped a contest that saw both teams overcome big leads. The Wildcats jumped out to a 5-1 lead after 2½ innings, led by Pryor's 3-run home run in the first and Travis Hayes' RBI double in the third.

But Western got three runs in the third and tied the game in the fourth on Martin's RBI triple to center field.

Pryor's second home run, a line drive over the fence in right-center field, gave Kentucky a 6-5 lead, but the Hilltoppers came right back.

Western scored seven runs in the fifth. Martin finished the inning with his grand slam home run off Janak Talwalkar that gave Western a 12-6 lead.

Kentucky 401 010 370-16 14 2
Western Kentucky 013 173 101-17 20 1
WP - Brian Smith (4-0), LP - Adam Milburn (1-1), 2B - Green, Rhea, Hayes (Kentucky); Flynn, Martin, McKenzie, Patton (Western); 3B - Martin (Western); HF - Blandford, Pryor (Kentucky); Martin, Sopko (Western).



Daily News/Ice Inlet
WESTERN'S Scott Flynn (right) is airborne as he completes a double-play throw Monday at Nick Denes Field.
Western beat Kentucky 17-16.

Dm

Western slugger in swing of things

By JASON FRAKES
The Daily News

One measly at bat.

After transferring last season from the College of Marin, a junior college in Kentfield, Calif., C.J. Martin had a little more in mind for his first season at Western Kentucky University.

Sure, Western was in dire need of pitching, but Martin has always felt more comfortable as an every day player, trotting to his position in the outfield and getting his four at bats each game.



MARTIN

season and making the most of his opportunity. In the NCAA's first statistical release this week, Martin ranks 25th in the nation in batting average.

Primarily used as a designated hitter, Martin leads Western in nearly every offensive category, including batting average (.456), hits (41), doubles (12), home runs (nine), RBI (36), slugging percentage (.911) and on-base percentage (.500).

Martin's 18-game hitting streak, which ranks sixth all-time at Western, was snapped against Arkansas-Little Rock on Saturday. His streak has Western coach Joel Murrie talking about Martin in the same breath as former Hilltopper stars Chris Turner, Bill Weyers and Paul Jackson.

"The thing those guys all had in common was that they all felt very comfortable and confident at the plate and made the game look somewhat easy," Murrie said. "When people talk about a streak like that, they all talk about the ball coming in a little bigger and coming in a little slower than normal."

Martin has hit safely in all three

"I've always been an outfielder and a hitter first," Martin said. "Pitching has always come second for me."

And after a season of bullpen work and mop-up duties, Martin is finally getting his wish this

games since his streak was broken and knocked in the winning run in Western's 3-2 win over Vanderbilt on Wednesday. Martin's game-winning hit came after he struck out three times in his first four at bats.

"There's an overused saying that goes something like the harder you work the luckier you get," Murrie said. "C.J. always works hard. He shows up every day and does his job. When something's wrong, he's smart enough to ask questions in order to improve himself."

And there's the word that seems to pop up whenever someone talks about Martin — "smart."

At the College of Marin, Martin was named a scholar athlete along with being honored as an all-Bay Valley Conference performer. Among personal notes in Martin's entry in the Western media guide, Martin "plans to attend graduate school and eventually teach history."

Murrie calls him one of the smartest people he has ever coached. Al Endriss, Martin's coach at the College of Marin, tells a story of Martin's intellectual side.

"One of the things I'll always remember about C.J. were the bus rides to the games," Endriss said. "We used to have history quizzes with each other in the van on the way. We'd talk about history and philosophy. He was just a delight to be around."

If things had worked out right for Martin, he probably would have never showed up at Western. Out of Tam High School in Mill Valley, Calif., Martin played his freshman season at the University of San Francisco, hitting .216 in 42 games.

The Dons finished 8-44 that season, and a coaching change left Martin looking for somewhere else to play.

"A new coach came in, and I wasn't one of his players," Martin said. "He brought in 20 new recruits. I enjoyed playing there a lot, but I needed to go somewhere else."

Now at Western and with a little more than a month left in his college career, Martin just wants his run to continue.

"I continued to work on my hitting, even though I only got one at bat last year," Martin said. "Everything has come together for me this year, but I never dreamed of something like this."

Homeless but not teamless, Davis likes his progress

By JASON FRAKES 4-7-96 DM
The Daily News

Aside from his platoon spot as a catcher for the Charleston (W.Va.) Alley Cats and a bed in numerous hotels across the Southeast, James Davis is homeless.

But do not feel sorry for Davis. He is exactly where he wants to be.

The Franklin-Simpson High School graduate and former Western Kentucky University Hilltopper is playing for the Cincinnati Reds' Class A team in the South Atlantic League.

Davis is one of several former players from southcentral Kentucky and Western Kentucky University playing in the minor and major leagues.

After becoming a fixture behind the plate for the Hilltoppers from 1992 to 1995, Davis was selected by the Reds in the 20th round of last year's amateur draft and played rookie league ball in Princeton, W.Va.

After spending spring training in Plant City, Fla., Davis has moved up to Class A ball.

"This is kind of where I expected to be this year," Davis said. "It's kind of tough to move. You've got to prove yourself every day. A lot of guys have to stay and play another year of rookie ball. And there are a lot of guys here at Charleston who have been here a couple of years."

And while Davis will make his summer home in Charleston, he has not even seen the town. The Reds' spring training camp broke Wednesday, and Davis was in Columbus, Ga., on Thursday for his team's opener against the Redstixx. The game, an 8-7 Charleston win, marked the first of a 10-game road swing.

After four games in Columbus, the Alley Cats will play four in Macon, Ga., and two in Asheville, N.C.

Only then can Davis find housing in Charleston.

"They'll put us up in a hotel for a couple of days, but then we have to find a place to live," Davis said. "That's probably the roughest part of the whole thing."

Davis is not complaining and neither is his manager.

Davis hit .276 in Princeton with three home runs and 29 RBI. He added 10 doubles, 14 walks and eight stolen bases in 58 games.

Charleston manager Tommy Thompson likes what he has seen in Davis.

"He's got a real strong arm," Thompson said. "And he's got pretty good pop in his bat. Of course, they've all got to work on something."

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After playing one year on the Hill, Akins was selected by the Baltimore Orioles in the 12th round of the 1995 draft. The center fielder played rookie league ball in Sarasota, Fla., last summer and is with the Class A High Desert Mavericks of the California League. High Desert is located in Adelanto, Calif.

Akins' final statistics from his stint in Sarasota were unavailable.

Matt Bowles

The Glasgow High School product transferred from the University of Kentucky to Western last summer and played a year with the Hilltoppers.

The pitcher attended a Milwaukee Brewers' tryout camp last summer and signed a minor-league contract to play rookie league ball in Chandler, Ariz. Western Kentucky coach Joel Murrie said Bowles has since left the Brewers' organization and is assisting with the Glasgow High baseball team.

Ken Edenfield

Edenfield, who played his college ball at Western, is one of two local players in the big leagues.

Drafted in 1990 by the California Angels, the relief pitcher started this season on the Angels' major league roster after spending most of last season with the Angels' Triple-A team in Vancouver.

In Vancouver, Edenfield was 7-2 with a 3.45 ERA in 33 appearances. Edenfield struck out 44 and allowed 56 hits in 60 innings of work.

Greg Graham

A Bowling Green High graduate, Graham spent last summer with the New York Mets' Triple-A affiliate in Norfolk, Va. A representative of the Norfolk Tides said the infielder is no longer with the Mets' organization. No further information was unavailable.

Heath Haynes

Haynes was released from the Oakland Athletics' organization after having surgery on his pitching arm last season.

A former Hilltopper, Haynes was drafted by the Montreal Expos in 1991. Haynes spent last season with Oakland's Triple-A team in Edmonton, compiling a 2-0 mark with a 6.27 ERA in 18⅓ innings of work. Further information was unavailable.

Rodney Henderson

Next page

Thompson said the hardest part for young minor leaguers is getting used to the schedule — bus rides, games every day and hotels.

“When they’re just out of school, they’re used to two, three maybe four games a week,” Thompson said. “Here, they’re playing just about every day. And then you have to get on a bus and travel two, three or four hundred miles sometimes. The players usually get to used to the physical part of it. It’s the mental part that sometimes gets to them.”

Davis says he does not worry about the mental part. He just wants to play. For now, he will platoon behind the plate with Jason Larue, a fifth-round pick who played his rookie league ball last year in Billings, Mont.

Davis finds inspiration in Kelley Smith, his fiance since last Christmas, and in some encounters he had during spring training.

“We got to meet most of the players from all the minor league teams and some of the major leaguers,” Davis said. “They really kind of surprised me. They’re really just like everybody else. Of course, they’ve got a lot of money and they’re all driving around in their Porsches. But they’re really just like us. They know we’re not making a lot of money right now, but they’ve all been here before and can relate to it.”

Even being homeless for a while.

Here’s an update on other players with southcentral Kentucky ties. If you have any information on these or other players, please call the Daily News at (502)-781-1700.

Carlos Akins

Akins, who stole a Western-record 41 bases last year, has also moved a step up the ladder.

A Glasgow High School graduate, Henderson has moved up in the Montreal Expos’ organization to the Triple-A team in Ottawa.

Henderson spent last summer at the Expos’ Double-A team in Harrisburg, Pa. There, Henderson was 3-6 with a 4.31 ERA in 12 games. Henderson struck out 53 and allowed 51 hits in 56⅓ innings of work.

Mark Thompson

A 1989 graduate of Logan County High School, Thompson is now pitching for the Colorado Rockies.

Thompson spent most of last season between the Rockies and their Triple-A team in Colorado Springs. With the Rockies, Thompson was 2-3 with a 6.53 ERA in 21 games.

USA Today reported Friday that Thompson had been the subject of trade rumors with the Expos. The Rockies had reportedly considered trading Thompson for Kirk Rueter, who has compiled a 20-6 record in the big leagues with a 3.06 ERA.

“Many baseball people think Thompson, who throws a hard sinker and slider, has more potential,” USA Today reported.

Chris Turner.

Turner’s roller-coaster ride continues.

A Warren Central High School and Western graduate, Turner was drafted by the California Angels in 1991.

Turner has spent part of the last two summers with the major league team, but started this season with the Triple-A squad in Vancouver.

In Vancouver last summer, the catcher hit .266 with three home runs and 47 RBI in 80 games.

Turner hit .293 in spring training with two home runs and five RBI.

WKU baseball drops pair at Lamar

By the Daily News 4-7-76 DM

Western Kentucky University's baseball team blew an eight-run, ninth-inning lead in the first game and gave up 20 runs in the second to drop a doubleheader at Sun Belt Conference foe Lamar on Saturday.

After the Hilltoppers had built a 14-6 lead heading into the bottom of the ninth, Lamar scored nine in the bottom of the inning off Western relievers Christian Blackburn and Brian Smith to win 15-14. Only four of the nine runs were earned, and the winning run scored with one out.

Western pounded 17 hits in the opener, led by Erick Rosa's 5-for-5 performance and four RBI. Mike Sopko added three hits, and Scott Flynn had a home run and four RBI.

In the nightcap, the Cardinals got 17 hits, including nine doubles and three home runs, on their way to a 20-7 rout of Western. The Cardinals got five runs in both the first and third innings and exploded for nine runs in the fifth.

Rosa again led Western at the plate with two hits and two RBI.

Western (15-15, 5-8 Sun Belt Conference) plays Lamar (18-15, 6-8) today at 1 p.m.

GAME ONE

Western	303	430	100-14	17	2
Lamar	020	400	009-16	17	1
WP - Myhre (3-1); LP - Smith (5-1); 2B - Flynn, McKenzie, Sopko (Western); Bunling, Parker, Walker (Lamar); 3B - Idrett (Western); HR - Flynn (Western); Cook, Klem (Lamar).					

GAME TWO

.....	300	301	0-7	12	3
— Robinson (2-0), LP—Novotny (3-5), 2B—Grife, Western), Bunting (2), Klam, McNeel (2), Neale, Rieda, Walker (Lamar), HR—Sellers, Walker (2)	505	091	X-20	17	3

DN
MONDAY, APRIL 8, 1996

Western baseball falls again in ninth

By the Daily News

For the second time in as many days, Western Kentucky University's baseball team lost in the final inning.

A day after Lamar University overcame a 14-6 deficit with nine runs in the ninth, the Cardinals scored a single run in the ninth Sunday to beat the Hilltoppers 5-4 in Beaumont, Texas.

Lamar's win completed its sweep of the Sun Belt Conference series.

Western led 4-3 before Lamar tied the game with a run in the seventh, setting up its last inning heroics.

Western's Joe Pennertz fell to 1-5 with the loss. Pennertz allowed 10 hits and six walks in eight innings.

Shannon McKenzie, Erick Rosa and Mike Sopko each had two hits apiece for Western. Dan Grice added two RBI.

The Hilltoppers (15-16, 5-9 Sun Belt) host Eastern Kentucky at 6 p.m. on Tuesday. Lamar is 19-15 overall and 7-8 in the conference.

Western 030 100 000- 4 9 1
Lamar 210 000 101- 5 10 2
WP - Williams (2-5). LP - Joe Pennertz (1-5). 2B -
Rosa, Sopko (Western). 3B - Reda (Lamar).

Tuesday's game 4-5-96 DN

Western Kentucky University's pitching staff took a pounding for the second straight night Tuesday.

This time the offense could not bail the Hilltoppers out.

Austin Peay pounded 18 hits on its way to a 17-3 drubbing of the Hilltoppers at Nick Denes Field. Western's loss came a day after beating Kentucky 17-16.

The Governors (22-9) scored three runs in both the first and second innings off Western starter and Bowling Green High School graduate T.J. Freeman.

In the fourth, Austin Peay struck big, scoring eight runs off reliever Josh Novotney.

Austin Peay 330 800 102-17 18 3
Western 100 011 000-3 9 3
WP - Seth Massey (3-0), LP - T.J. Freeman (0-1), 2B
- Bennett 2, Manning 2 (Austin Peay); Chabala, Martin
(Western), 3B - Turken (Austin Peay), HR - Sloan
(Austin Peay); Chabala (Western).

Martin's 10th-inning single lifts Hilltoppers to victory over Vandy

By the Daily News

4-8-96 ON

C.J. Martin's single to left field in the 10th inning scored Chad Chabala from second base to give Western Kentucky University a 3-2 win over Vanderbilt on Wednesday at Nick Denes Field.

After Western reliever Brian Smith pitched out of a two-on, one-out jam in the top of the tenth, Chabala led off the bottom of the inning with a single to center field.

Chabala stole second base and Matt Idlett walked, setting up Martin's game-winning hit.

The Hilltoppers (15-13) jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the third on Josh Patton's lead-off home run. The Commodores (13-15) tied the game in the fifth on Jimmy Dykes' RBI single.

Western took the advantage again in the sixth when Idlett homered to left field, but Vanderbilt answered in the seventh when Dan Grice's throwing error scored Ryan Brown.

The Hilltoppers loaded the bases in the ninth but came up empty.

Smith improved to 5-0 with the win, pitching 3⅓ innings of scoreless relief and striking out seven.

Shannon McKenzie led Western at the plate with three hits.

Western travels to Beaumont, Texas, for a three-game series with Lamar this weekend. The teams will meet in a doubleheader at 1 p.m. Saturday and in a single game at 1 p.m. Sunday.

Vanderbilt 000 010 100 0- 2 10 1
Western 010 001 000 1- 3 9 2

WP — Brian Smith (5-0). LP — Clinton Johnston (1-3). 2B — Brown, Davis, Wix (Vanderbilt); Chabala, McKenzie (Western). HR — Idlett, Patton (Western).

Western's good-arms duo tags for victory over Eastern

By JASON FRANKS 4-10-76
The Daily News DN

On a Western Kentucky University pitching staff with a combined ERA of 6.81, bright spots have been hard to find.

Without freshman Stephen Stenle and sophomore Brian Smith, the staff might just be in the dark.

Entering Tuesday night's game with Eastern Kentucky at Nick Denes Field, Stenle and Smith both sported 5-1 records and were the only two Hilltoppers with ERAs less than six. The 10 wins accounted for two-thirds of Western's 15 victories.

The duo strutted its stuff again Tuesday night, combining to hold Eastern Kentucky scoreless over the final 4 1/3 innings to secure a 10-7 Western win.

Smith (6-1, 3.65 ERA) got the win, allowing two base runners (one on an error) and striking out three over 2 1/3 innings of work. Stenle (5-1, 3.10 ERA) picked up his second save of the year, allowing just one walk and striking out four in his two innings.

Hilltopper coach Joel Murrie likes more than just the numbers of Smith and Stenle.

"Smith's going to give you a great effort every time out," Murrie said. "He plays much bigger than his 5-foot-8 stature. The key to his success is throwing the slider for a strike down in the zone."

"Stenle's just a guy that I really like being around. He's an exciting player, and he's got an exciting per-

sonality. As long as he keeps working, he can go as far as his talent takes him."

Smith leads Western in appearances with 16, all in relief. His success has come after a freshman season in which he compiled a 2-3 record and a 6.28 ERA in 15 games.

"I felt like coming into this season that I was ready for this role after last year," Smith said. "I think I've got much better control of my pitches than I did last year. And just having more experience is a big part of this game."

Stenle is a true freshman from New Albany, Ind., who leads Western in starts, complete games, shutouts, innings pitched and strikeouts.

"I really didn't expect this coming in," Stenle said. "I just thought I'd get a few innings and do what I could to help the team. But I'm glad to get this opportunity, and I think my confidence will continue to rise."

Murrie showed his confidence in Smith early Tuesday night. With Eastern leading 7-5 in the top of the fifth, Murrie put Smith in for reliever Christian Blackburn with runners on first and third and two outs.

Smith got Colonel catcher Ted Elliott to fly out to left field and kill the Eastern Kentucky threat.

"That was a real big out," Murrie said. "I think that kind of took the momentum away from them."

The Hilltoppers responded in the

bottom of the inning with the only three runs they would need the rest of the way.

Shannon McKenzie led the inning off with a single up the middle and scored on Erick Rosa's double off the wall in right-center field.

With two outs, Dan Grice singled in front of left fielder Brandon Berger. The ball hopped over Berger's head, allowing Rosa to score from second and Grice to advance to third. Berger was credited with an error.

Chad Chabala followed with a double that scored Grice and gave Western an 8-7 lead.

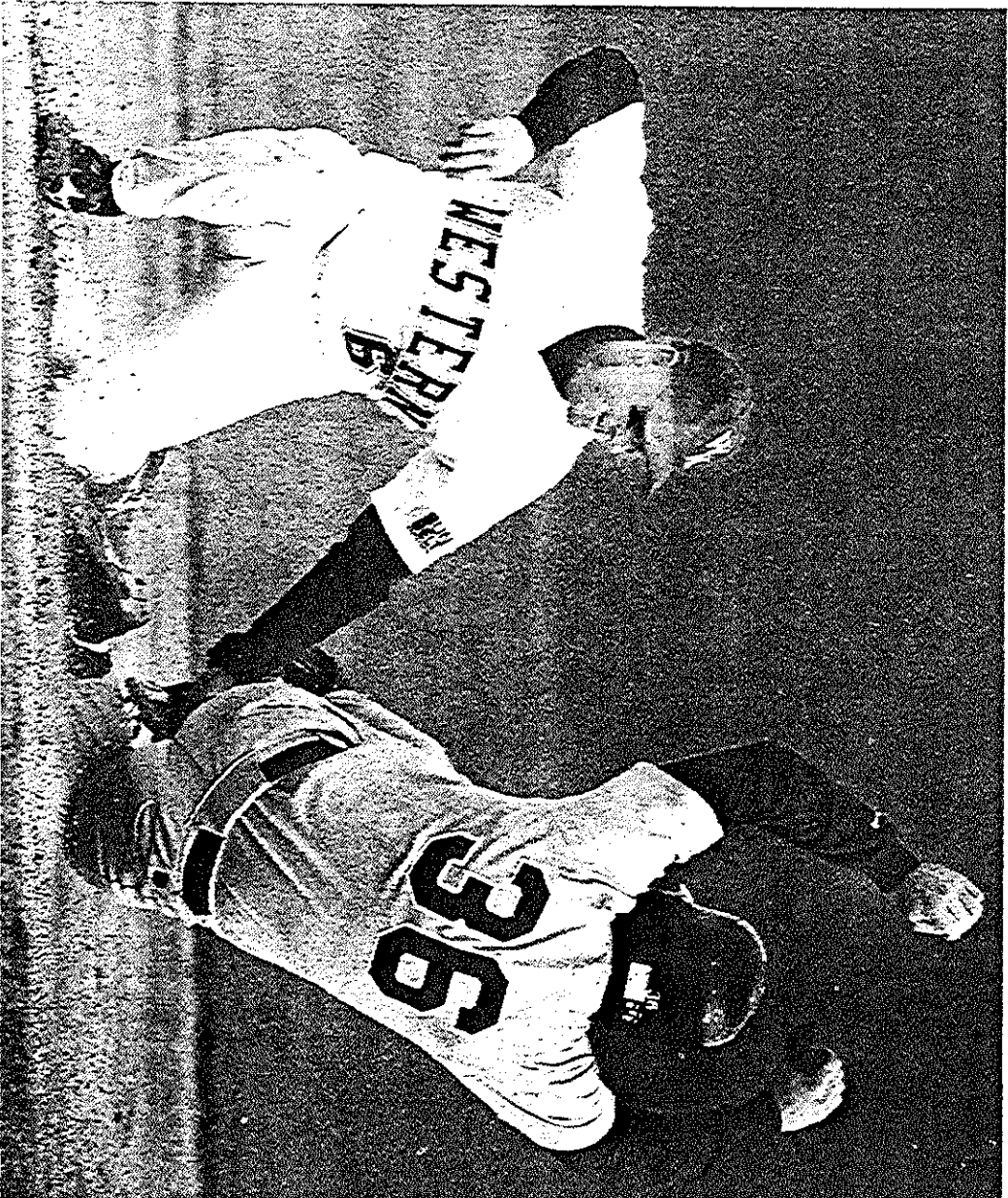
Western got single runs in the sixth and seventh to pad its lead. Stenle took over for Smith on the mound in the eighth to secure the win.

McKenzie led Western at the plate with three hits and two RBIs. C.J. Martin added two hits, two RBIs and three runs scored.

Berger paced the Colonels (11-22) with three hits. Anthony Adkins added a home run and three RBIs.

The Hilltoppers (16-16) take today off before hosting Middle Tennessee State on Thursday at 6 p.m. The Blue Raiders are Western's longest standing rivalry as the two teams have met 163 times.

Eastern Ky. 402 010 000—7 10 2
Western Ky. 140 031 10x—10 12 2
WP — Brian Smith (6-1), LP — Joe Weatherholtz (1-4),
Save — Stephen Stenle (2), 2B — Bussell, Cornea, Elliott
(Eastern Ky.); Chabala (2), Martin, Rosa (Western Ky.), HR
— Adkins (Eastern Ky.).



WESTERN Kentucky second baseman Scott Flynn tags Eastern Kentucky's Brandon Berger for an out to thwart Berger's steal attempt during the first inning of their game Tuesday at Nick Denes field.

Daily News/Wales Hunter

Freeman gets first college win; WKU tops Evansville in tennis

By the Daily News ^{4-12-96 DR}

A six-run outburst in a 39-minute atbat in the bottom of the first inning prompted Western Kentucky University's baseball team to an 8-4 win over Middle Tennessee State on Thursday at Nick Denes Field.

The Hilltoppers (17-16) sent 11 batters to the plate in the first, collecting five hits and four walks. Shannon McKenzie's two-run double was the big blow.

The Blue Raiders (20-17) cut the Western lead to 7-4 with a single run in the sixth but were held scoreless the rest of the contest.

Five Western pitchers combined to hold the Blue Raiders to six hits. Bowling Green High School graduate T.J. Freeman (1-1) got his first win as a Hilltopper, allowing two runs in three innings of work.

McKenzie led Western at the plate with two doubles and three RBI. Erick Rosa and Chad Chabala both added two hits and an RBI.

Western begins a three-game series at Sun Belt Conference foe South Alabama on Saturday with a doubleheader that begins at 1 p.m. The teams will play a single game at 1 p.m. on Sunday.

Middle Tennessee St. 010 111 000— 4 6 0
Western Ky. 600 101 00x— 8 10 1
WP — Freeman (1-1). LP — Powers (0-2). 2B —
Shoemaker (MTSU); McKenzie (2), Wagner (Western).
HR — Shoemaker, Hill (MTSU).

WKU baseball loses 9-7 to Jaguars

By the Daily News 4-15-96 DN

Western Kentucky University lost its seventh straight Sun Belt Conference game Sunday, falling 9-7 at South Alabama.

The game was called with one out in the top of the seventh after a one hour and 25-minute rain delay.

The Hilltoppers (17-19, 5-12 Sun Belt) jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first on a 2-run home run by Matt Idlett. But the Jaguars (26-12, 14-4) responded with five runs in the bottom of the inning, knocking Western starter C.J. Martin out of the game after pitching one-third of an inning.

Western tied the score in the second on an RBI walk by Martin and a 2-run single by Josh Patton.

The teams then traded single runs

before the Jaguars took control in the fourth against Western hurler Brian Smith, who fell to 6-2 with the loss.

The Jaguars got RBI hits from Hugh Lopes and Avery Youngblood in the fourth to take an 8-6 lead. Terry Wiley singled home a run in the fifth for a 9-6 lead.

Scott Flynn scored for Western in the sixth on a Chad Chabala groundout to provide the final margin.

Chabala, Erick Rosa and Dan Grice each had two hits for Western. Every Jaguar starter had at least one hit.

Western will Louisville on Tuesday at 6 p.m.

South Alabama 510 210 x- 9 11 1
WP — Pete Della Ratta (6-1). LP — Brian Smith (6-2). 2B
— Taylor, Youngblood (South Alabama). HR — Idlett
(Western); Bouie, Britt (South Alabama).

Western 231 001 0- 7 9 0

Edenfield update

Pitcher Ken Edenfield, who played his collegiate baseball at Western, has been sent down by the California Angels to their Triple-A team in Vancouver.

On Friday, the Angels activated pitcher Scott Sanderson from the 15-day disabled list and sent down Edenfield, who started the season with the Angels.

Edenfield will join former Western teammate Chris Turner in Vancouver. Turner is a catcher in the Angels organization.

4-15-96 DN

Hilltoppers capitalize on U of L errors for 12-9 win

By JASON FRAKES
The Daily News

Having won two Division II national championships as a coach at the University of Tampa, Lelo Prado has seen good baseball.

The first-year University of Louisville coach was convinced that what he saw out of his team Tuesday night at Nick Denes Field was not good baseball.

"My son's Little League team could have made those plays," said Prado after watching his Cardinals commit three crucial errors on their way to a 12-9 loss to Western Kentucky. "We're just not a very good baseball team. We don't know how to win, and that's going to be the case until we get some new guys in here."

Until then, Prado may have to suffer through what has already been a tough season, especially defensively. The Cardinals (13-25) have committed at least one error in all but three of their games.

More telling is Louisville's .950 fielding percentage entering Tuesday night's game, a mark that would rank it next to last were the Cardinals playing in the Sun Belt Conference.

Most telling were Louisville's three errors Tuesday night, all coming on somewhat routine plays. Western coach Joel Murrie, whose team improved to 18-19 with the win, admitted defense was the deciding factor.

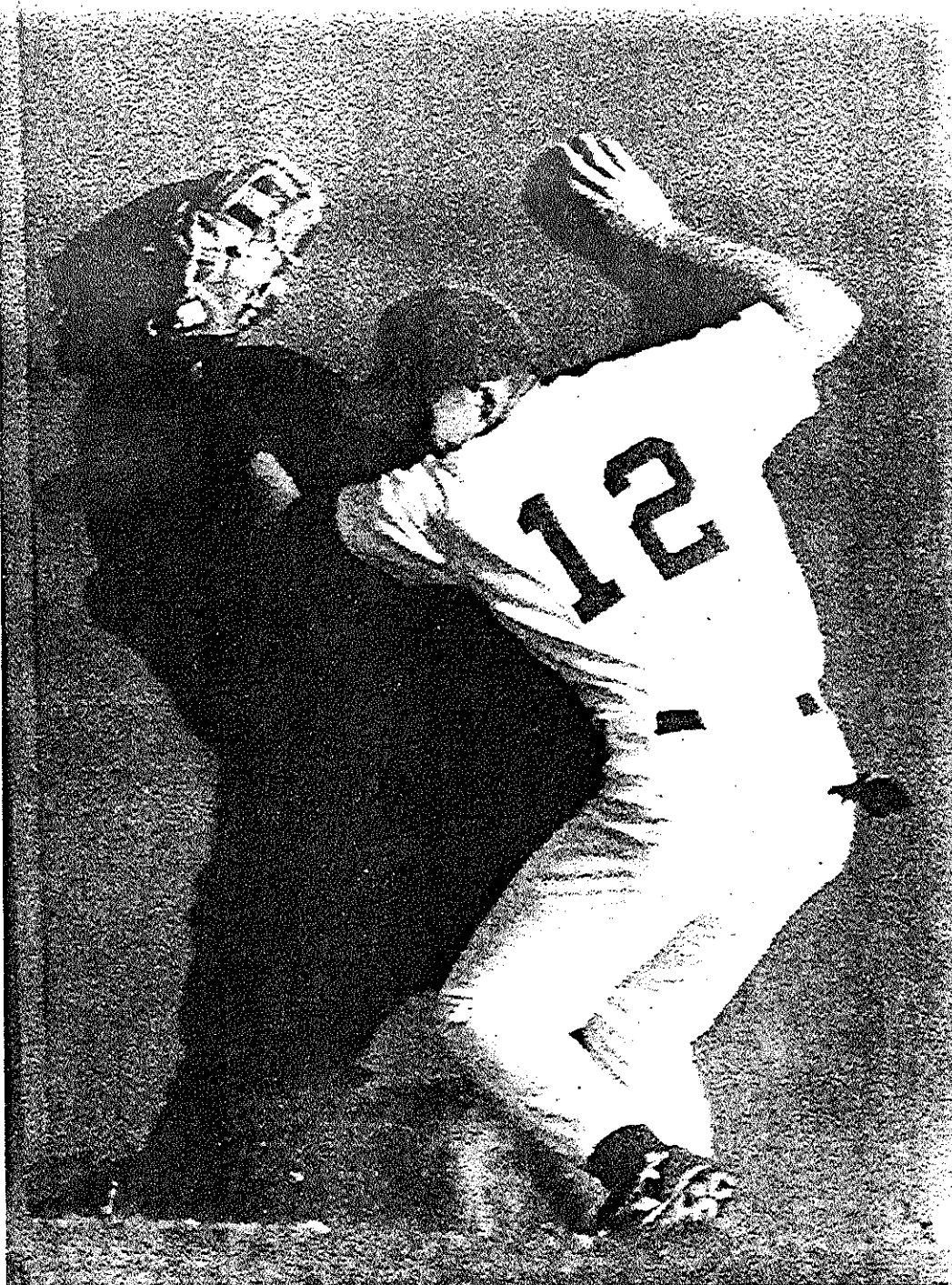
"Most definitely," Murrie said. "They allowed some balls to drop, and it kind of opened the flood gates for us. You just cannot be a sound team without good defense and pitching. And if you don't have good pitching, you better have good defense."

The Hilltoppers got neither in the first inning as the Cardinals got four runs off Western starter Stephen Stemle. Louisville got its first run on an RBI single by Matt Berger and loaded the bases with two outs.

Designated hitter Doug Lorenz lifted a high fly ball to center field that Mike Wagner misplayed, allowing three runs to score. The play was ruled a double for Lorenz, who was thrown out at third.

Western answered with two runs in both the first and second innings to tie the score and took advantage of two Louisville errors in the fourth to break the game open.

With Louisville starter Wesley Stumbo already knocked out of the game, Western's Erick Rosa singled off reliever David Sonson to open the fourth. But Sonson struck out the next two Hilltoppers and appeared to be out of the inning when Dan



Daily News/Wales Hunter

WESTERN KENTUCKY center fielder Mike Wagner crashes into the outfield wall while attempting to chase down a fly ball during the first inning of Tues-

day's game against Louisville at Nick Denes Field. The Hilltoppers improved to 18-19 with a 12-9 win and will play at Austin Peay State tonight.

4-17-96 DN

Grice hit a grounder to third baseman Aaron Kruetzer.

Kruetzer booted it to keep the inning alive for Western, and Chad Chabala followed with a single to score Rosa, giving Western a 5-4 lead. Matt Idlett then walked to load the bases, and C.J. Martin followed with a routine fly ball to right fielder Danny Haas.

But the ball missed Haas' glove, allowing all three Western runners to score for a 8-4 advantage. Martin then scored on a double by Josh Patton to give Western a 9-4 lead.

Chabala, who finished with a 3-for-5 performance, two triples and four RBI, said the early four-run deficit was not a problem.

"I think it just shows what kind

of guys we have on this team," Chabala said. "It's a nine-inning game, and as long as you play hard all 27 outs we're going to make something happen. We have good enough bats on this team that we know we're going to score some runs."

And after the first, the Hilltoppers got some pitching to go with their runs. Stemle settled down and held Louisville scoreless until the fifth. The Cardinals got two runs to cut the lead to 9-6 and had runners at second and third and two outs when Christian Blackburn came relieved Stemle.

Blackburn struck out Dwayne Keene to get out of the inning and went on to pitch 2½ innings of

scoreless relief, striking out four.

"Christian has been very valuable for us in that role," Murrie said. "It's difficult for a person who started for us last year to go do the non-glamour work in the bullpen, but he has done a good job for us."

Both teams scored three runs in their final at bats for the final margin.

Western travels to Austin Peay State tonight for a 6:30 game. The Governors whipped Western 17-3 on April 2.

Louisville 400 020 003—9 13 3
Western 220 500 03x—12 10 1
WP — Christian Blackburn (1-2). LP — David Sonson (2-1). Save — Brian Smith (2). 2B — Lorenz, Weidemann (Western); Idlett, Patton (Western). 3B — Chabala (2) (Western). HR — Haas, Kruetzer (Louisville).

DN

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1996

Hilltoppers rally past APSU 8-4

By the Daily News

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. — Western Kentucky University's baseball team snapped the streak, avenged an earlier loss, rallied in the ninth and improved to .500 all in one game Wednesday night at Austin Peay State University.

Trailing 4-2 heading into the ninth inning, the Hilltoppers scored six runs in their final at bat and beat the Governors 8-4.

Western avenged a 17-3 loss to Austin Peay on April 2 and improved to 19-19. The Governors dropped to 29-14.

Austin Peay shortstop Chuck Abbott was 0-for-4, ending his 42-game hitting streak. The streak was the nation's longest at the time and finished as the fourth-longest in NCAA history.

With Austin Peay reliever Mike Eikenberry on the mound, Scott Flynn led off the ninth with a single. With one out, Chad Chabala singled to score Flynn and cut the Austin Peay lead to 4-3.

Matt Idlett flied out to center, and C.J. Martin followed with a walk. Josh Patton then hit a three-run home run to right field to give Western a 6-4 lead. Later, Flynn added a two-run single for the final margin.

Western reliever Brian Smith retired the Governors in the ninth to improve his record to 7-2. Shannon McKenzie finished 3-for-5 with a home run, double and two RBI.

Bowling Green High School graduate T.J. Freeman pitched the first six innings for Western, allowing one unearned run, six hits and five walks. Freeman struck out three.

Western hosts Tennessee Tech tonight at 6.

Western 000 100 016— 8 10 1
Austin Peay 000 001 210— 4 11 2
WP — Brian Smith (7-2). LP — Mike Eikenberry (7-3). 2B — McKenzie (Western); Bennett, Maier (2), Manning (2) (Austin Peay). 3B — Manning (Austin Peay). HR — McKenzie, Patton (Western).

Hilltopper pitchers shutout Tenn. Tech

4-19-96
DN

By the Daily News

Three Western Kentucky University pitchers combined for a two-hit shutout as the Hilltoppers romped past Tennessee Tech 14-0 on Thursday at Nick Denes Field.

Starter Christian Blackburn improved to 2-2 with the win, allowing one hit and striking out two in five innings of work. Josh Novotney and Mike Robison both pitched two innings of scoreless relief.

Western (20-19) pounded 16 hits in the contest. Chad Chabala, Matt Idlett and C.J. Martin each had three hits. Idlett knocked in four runs, and Martin added three RBI. Chabala scored four runs.

Tennessee Tech fell to 17-26.

Winners of three straight, the Hilltoppers will host Sun Belt Conference foe Arkansas State in a three-game series this weekend. Saturday's doubleheader is scheduled to begin at 3 p.m. with a single game set for Sunday at 1 p.m.

Tennessee Tech 000 000 000 — 0 2 2
Western 141 402 11x—14 16 1
WP — Blackburn (2-2). LP — Vogt (0-5). 2B — Grice, Idlett, Martin, McKenzie, Prida (Western). 3B — Idlett (2) (Western).

Roommates prospering at Western

By JASON FRANKES

The Daily News

Oscar and Felix? The Odd Couple?

The terms do not apply to Western Kentucky University baseball players Chad Chabala and Shannon McKenzie.

In fact the roommates who came to Western from the same MCKENZIE

junior college are about as alike off the field as they are consistent on the diamond.

"Shannon and I are both kind of quiet people," Chabala said. "We have a lot of fun hanging around each other. We really get along great."

Great might describe the years both are having for the 20-19 Hilltoppers.

And while Chabala and McKenzie describe themselves as quiet, their numbers are very loud.

McKenzie ranks second on the team with a .359 batting average and is one of two Hilltoppers to start every game this season. The first baseman leads the team in walks



'Shannon and I are both kind of quiet people. We have a lot of fun hanging around each other. We really get along great.'

—Chad Chabala
Hilltopper left fielder

(29) and on-base percentage (.484) and has committed only three errors for a .992 fielding percentage.

Chabala has started all but two games for Western and is fourth on the team with a .342 batting average.

He leads the team in runs scored (36) and stolen bases (15). The left fielder ranks second with 29 RBI, and he has yet to commit an error this season.

Their consistency is almost boring.

"Those two just come to the park every day and play the game," Hilltopper coach Joel Murrie said. "I've never had a problem with either of them. Anything I ask of them, they do it. They both come from great baseball backgrounds, and they've both been great additions to our program."

Part of their background includes two years at Allegany Community College in Cumberland, Md.

McKenzie grew up 15 minutes from Cumberland in Frotsburg, Md., and followed the nationally renowned junior college program at Allegany throughout his youth.

Chabala grew up three hours away from Cumberland in Milton, Pa. The pair finally got to know each other as freshmen at Allegany.

During their sophomore years, Allegany advanced to the Junior College World Series in Grand Junction, Colo.

"That was one of the best baseball experiences of my life," McKenzie said. "We were playing in front of 10,000 people every game. It felt awesome being a part of that and knowing that we were one of the best 10 teams in the nation."

For most of his sophomore season, McKenzie has planned on playing his final two seasons at West Virginia. But when things fell

through, McKenzie decided to follow his buddy Chabala to Western.

The two visited Western together. Chabala liked the competition of the Sun Belt Conference.

"I think I signed here about 10 days or so before he did," Chabala said. "We talked about coming here together a lot. I think we're both pretty happy with our decisions."

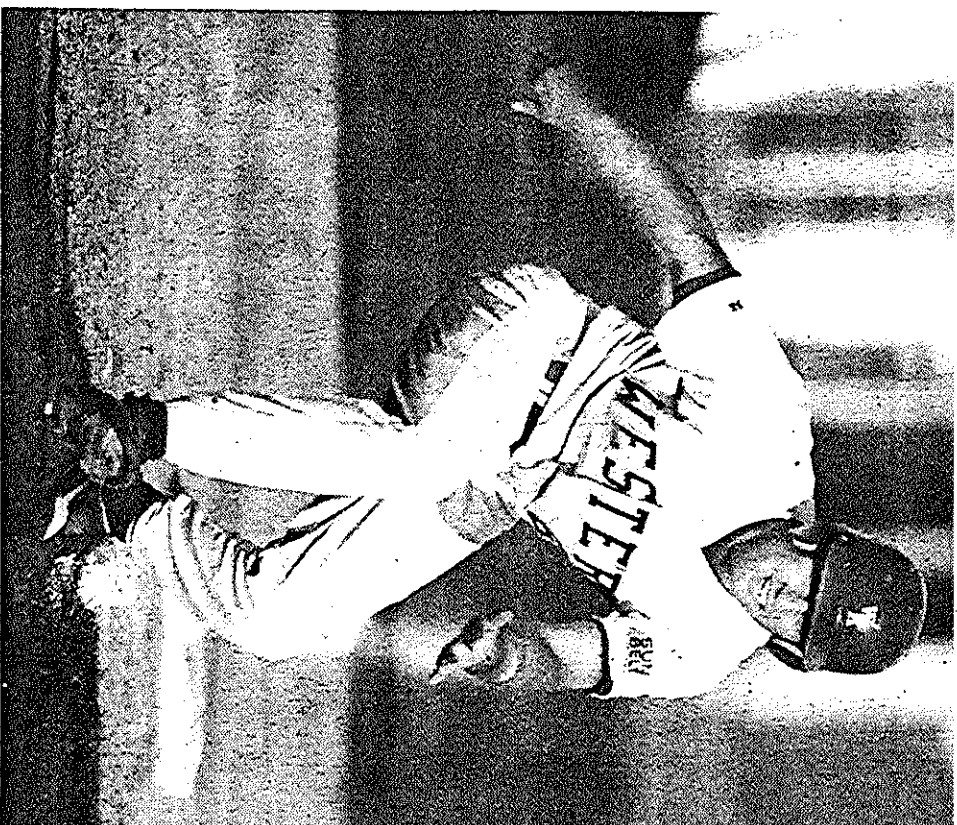
Murrie and the Hilltoppers have reaped the most. Both started all but one game in their first seasons at Western last year. Their consistency was evident throughout the season.

Chabala set a Western record for hitting safely in 10 straight at bats. McKenzie added an eight-game hitting streak during the season and hit safely in nine of his last 10 games.

Their fit as roommates has been about as good as their fit at Western. Neither had a complaint about the other's living habits. Instead, there seems to be a mutual respect amongst the two.

"I really get along with him great," McKenzie said. "We talk a lot and pick each other up when we get down."

Said Chabala: "We have a great time together. Living with him and playing baseball with him has been great."



Daily News/Wales Hunter

WESTERN left fielder Chad Chabala leads the Hilltoppers in runs scored and stolen bases. Chabala and his roommate Shannon McKenzie have helped lead Western to a 20-19 record this season.

Arkansas St. pitching shuts down Tops in sweep

By the Daily News 4-21-96 DN

Arkansas State got complete games from both of its starting pitchers and swept Western Kentucky in a Sun Belt Conference doubleheader at Nick Denes Field on Saturday.

In the opener, Jay Akin pitched all ten innings as the Indians pulled out an extra-inning 3-2 win over the Hilltoppers.

Arkansas State got single runs in the third and fourth of Western starter Stephen Stenle before Western rallied.

Josh Patton's two-out double in the eighth scored Matt Idlett to cut the Arkansas State lead to 2-1.

In the ninth, Mike Wagner doubled home Scott Flynn to tie the score and advanced to third on the throw to the plate. Dan Grice flied out to center, and Wagner raced

home attempting to score the winning run.

But Arkansas State center fielder John Nichol gunned down Wagner at the plate, sending the game into extra innings.

The Indians loaded the bases with no outs in the tenth off Western reliever Brian Smith, who fell to 7-3 with the loss. Pinch hitter Randy Sugg grounded to the third baseman Idlett, who attempted to turn a double play. But Sugg beat the throw to first, allowing Reginald Murphy to score from third for a 3-2 lead.

Akin (7-3) retired the side in the tenth to get the win. Akin allowed 10 hits, walked two and struck out five. Stenle allowed seven hits and five walks and struck out seven in nine innings of work.

Idlett and Erick Rosa both had three hits for Western. Shannon

McKenzie added two hits.

In the nightcap, Jason Benson (7-4) allowed five hits in seven innings of action as the Indians shutout the Hilltoppers 4-0. Benson did not allow a walk and did not strike out any batters.

The Indians got the only runs they would need in the second inning off Western starter Joe Penneritz (1-7). Todd Rhoades doubled home Greg Crow and eventually scored on a double play to give Arkansas State a 2-0 lead.

Arkansas State plated two insurance runs in the seventh off

relievers Christian Blackburn and Mike Robison.

Dan Grice had two singles for the Hilltoppers.

Arkansas State (28-16, 13-7 Sun Belt) and Western (20-21, 5-14) will complete the series today at 1 p.m. at Denes Field.

GAME ONE

Arkansas State	.....	001	100	000	1-	3	8	0
Western	.....	000	000	011	0-	2	10	3
WP - Jay Akin (7-3); LP - Brian Smith (7-3); 2B - Patton, Rosa, Wagner (Western).								

GAME TWO

Arkansas State	.....	020	000	2-	4	8	0
Western	.....	000	000	0-	0	5	3
WP - Jason Benson (7-4); LP - Joe Penneritz (1-7); 2B - Bowman, Crow, Nichol, Rhoades (Arkansas State); Patton (Western); 3B - Crow (Arkansas State).							

WKU baseball team beats ASU 11-3

By the Daily News 4-22-96 D77

Western Kentucky University's baseball team broke a nine-game losing streak against Sun Belt Conference opponents Sunday with an 11-3 win over Arkansas State at Nick Denes Field.

The win was Western's first in the conference since a victory on March 30 in the first game of a doubleheader against Arkansas-Little Rock.

Bowling Green High School graduate T.J. Freeman hurled five-hit ball over six innings Sunday to pick up the win for the Hilltoppers. Freeman gave up two runs in the first but held the Indians scoreless until they scored a single run in the sixth.

Freeman (1-1) walked six and struck out six. Reliever Josh Novotney allowed one hit and struck out three in three innings of relief.

After Freeman allowed his two first-inning runs, Western tied the game with single runs in the first and second.

In the third, the Hilltoppers (21-21, 6-14 Sun Belt) broke the game open led by Josh Patton's three-run home run. C.J. Martin's double scored Erick Rosa to give Western a 6-2 lead.

Western pounded 12 hits and took advantage of eight Arkansas State walks. The Indians dropped to 28-17 overall and 13-8 in the Sun Belt.

Patton finished with two hits and five RBI. Matt Idett added three hits and three runs, and Shannon McKenzie knocked two hits and scored three runs.

Western travels to Vanderbilt on Tuesday for a 7 p.m. contest.

Arkansas State	.....	200	001	000	-	3	6	4
Western	.....	114	302	000	-	11	12	0
WP -	T.J. Freeman (1-1), 1P -	Cabin Key (4-6), 2B -	Murphy (Arkansas State), Idett, Martin, Rosa (Western), HR -	Patton (Western).				

College baseball: Josh Patton went 3 for 5 and drove in five runs, and his three-run home run in the third gave Western Kentucky the lead for good as the Hilltoppers crushed visiting Arkansas State 11-3 to avoid a three-game sweep. 4-22-76 CJ

Western is 21-21, 6-14 in the Sun Belt Conference. Arkansas State is 28-17, 13-8.

Vandy pitcher sets saves record in WKU's 13-10 loss

By the Daily News **4-24-96**
NASHVILLE — Freshman pitcher Clinton Johnston broke a Vanderbilt University record with his seventh save this season, and the Commodores downed visiting Western Kentucky 13-10 on Tuesday.

Johnston entered the game in the eighth inning with one out and the bases loaded and struck out two of three Hilltoppers to get Vandy out of the jam.

Western (21-22) jumped out to a 4-0 lead, but Vanderbilt (23-19) plated five runs in the bottom of the fourth inning with the help of five

straight hits and never relinquished the lead.

Western's Shannon McKenzie had three hits, including his fifth and sixth home runs of the year, and drove in four runs. Hilltoppers C.J. Martin and Erick Rosa also homered, and Matt Idlett had four of Western's 18 hits.

Johnston slammed his 10th homer on the year with a two-run blast in the seventh inning to finish with four RBI. Josh Paul, Glenn Davis and Ryan Brown each had three of Vandy's 16 hits.

Pitcher Brad Hastings (2-0) pick-

ed up the win, and Joe Pennertz (1-8) took the loss.

Western will host Murray State tonight at 6.

Western 013 002 132-12 18 4
Vanderbilt 000 630 606-13 18 2
WP — Hastings (2-0), LP — Pennertz (1-8), HB —
(Western) Martin, McKenzie 2, Rosa; (Vanderbilt)
Johnston, 2B — (Western) Idlett, Patton, Sappo; (Vander-
bilt) Brown, Davis.

Track and field

Western's Nick Aliwell has been named the Sun Belt Conference's Performer of the Week after qualifying for the NCAA Championships

in the 10,000-meter run.

Aliwell qualified with a time of 28 minutes, 56 seconds at the Mount SAC Relays held Saturday at Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, Calif. His time was 14 seconds faster than the NCAA qualifying time of 29:10.00.

Aliwell placed 28th overall at the

invitationl meet. His time was the fastest in the nation this year by a collegian. Several professional runners competed at the meet with Aliwell.

The NCAA Championships will be held May 29-June 2 in Eugene, Ore.

Dream Player of the Week

A donation will be made to the *Dream Factory* in the name of DAVMEON FISHBACK (AUBURN) AND JAMIE WALZ (WKU) Fishback and Walz culminated their high school basketball careers by being named Mr. and Miss Basketball in the state of Kentucky. Sponsored by Paul Gray Physical Therapy 842-1690

Area stars shine in Topper rout

By JASON FRAKES 4.25.96
The Daily News DN

Forget the local department store chain that sponsored Wednesday's Western Kentucky-Murray State baseball matchup.

Wednesday was 14th District night at Nick Denes Field.

Bowling Green High School graduate T.J. Freeman got the best of his former district mates, going 1-for-1 with an RBI before pitching three scoreless innings in the Hilltoppers' 19-1 massacre of Murray State.

The Thoroughbreds (18-26) rostered former Franklin-Simpson stars Craig Delk and Greg Harvey. Franklin-Simpson played in the 14th District before moving to the 13th District in 1994.

All three have shown signs of repeating their high school successes on the college level.

Freeman, who helped lead the Purples to the state championship game last summer, struck out four and allowed no hits in his three innings of relief Wednesday. The outing came three days after Freeman got his first college win in Western's 11-3 victory over Arkansas State on Sunday.

Freeman struggled early in the season with arm problems but said he is beginning to get into a groove.

"My arm has gotten a lot stronger since the beginning of the season," Freeman said. "It just needed some time."

And with time, Freeman has steadily climbed the ladder on Western's pitching staff. Freeman's 4.76 ERA is third-best on the squad. Opponents are hitting .247 against Freeman, which ranks him first on the team.

Hilltopper coach Joel Murrie plans to use Freeman as a starter during this weekend's Sun Belt Conference series at Jacksonville.

"I think T.J. is definitely gaining confidence out there," Murrie said. "He needs to work ahead in the count a little more, but his movement and speed are definitely what we need on this team."

Delk and Harvey have given Murray State coach Mike Thieke a little of what his team needs as well.

Delk, who was a freshman on Franklin-Simpson's state championship team in 1991, hit .310 as a freshman at Murray State last season. Hampered by a wrist injury for most of this year, Delk entered Thursday's game hitting .256 with 16 RBI.

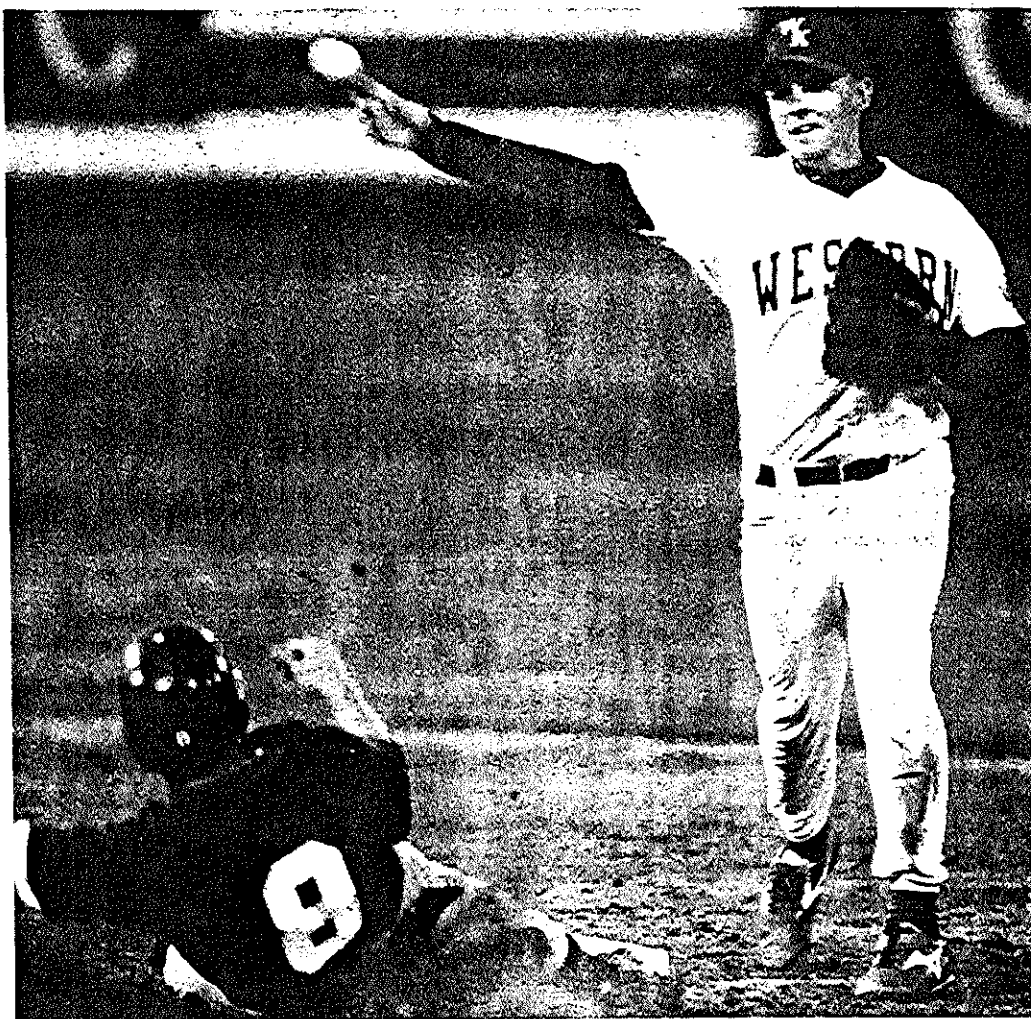
And while Delk was 0-for-0 at the plate Wednesday with a walk and a sacrifice bunt, his best work came on defense at third base. Delk robbed Matt Idlett of a base hit with a diving stop to his right to open the first inning. In the second, Delk dove to his right to snag Erick Rosa's line drive.

After playing shortstop much of last season, Delk showed the move to third base has been the least of his problems.

"This has been the most difficult year of baseball I've ever had because of my injury," Delk said. "It's really kept me from playing up to my capabilities."

Delk's resiliency has most impressed Thieke.

"I've been more impressed with him this year even though his



Daily News/Wales Hunter

WESTERN second baseman Scott Flynn turns a double play during the top of the fifth inning of Wednesday's game against Murray State at Nick Denes Field. Western evened its record at 22-22 with a 19-1 win.



Batting .256 this season after hitting for a .310 average as a freshman at Murray State University has made 1996 'the most difficult year of baseball I've ever had. ... It's really kept me from playing up to my capabilities.'

— Craig Delk
Franklin-Simpson product

numbers aren't as good as they were last year," Thieke said. "Craig's shown me a lot just by being out there with that injury he has."

Harvey has shown Thieke a lot in some of Murray State's biggest wins. A freshman, Harvey picked up saves against Southeastern Conference opponents Alabama and Ole Miss earlier this season. Harvey did not pitch Wednesday, but he has compiled a 3-3 mark with three saves and a 5.53 ERA while working out of the bullpen.

"Most freshmen don't adjust to

college as well as Greg has this year," Thieke said. "He's given us a lot of quality innings out of the bullpen. He's just going to keep getting better as he gains experience."

Western saw most of Murray State's bullpen Wednesday, roughing up six Thoroughbred pitchers for 18 hits. The Hilltoppers broke the game open in the third, sending 11 batters to the plate and scoring six runs.

C.J. Martin's two-run triple was the big blow of the inning. Martin finished 3-for-6 with three runs

and six RBI. He added a three-run home run in the eighth.

Western's Scott Flynn was 4-for-5 with three runs, and Idlett added three hits, three runs and two RBI. Josh Patton extended his hitting streak to 13 games with a 2-for-5 performance.

Western (22-22) will play at Middle Tennessee State tonight at 7.

Murray State 010 000 000— 1 5 4
Western 018 180 14—19 18 0
WP—Stephen Stenle (6-2), LP—Adam Hines (1-3),
2B—Grice, Idlett, Patton (Western), 3B—Martin
(Western), HR—Martin (Western).

Series sweep and some help Toppers in Sun Belt tourney

By JASON FRAKES
The Daily News 4-26-96

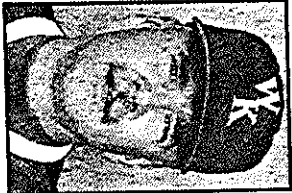
Three wins and a little help. If Western Kentucky University's baseball team can get them all this weekend, it might just have something to play for next week.

The Hilltoppers (22-23, 6-14 Sun Belt Conference) travel to Jacksonville (21-24, 10-10) this weekend for a three-game series. Saturday's doubleheader begins at 12:30 p.m. with a single game set for Sunday at 12:30 p.m.

With only two weekends remaining in the Sun Belt's regular season, Western needs a lot of wins and a lot of help to get into the Sun Belt Tournament, which will be held May 15-18 at the home field of the regular-season champion. The top six teams in the conference advance to the tournament, which Western has not made since 1992.

"I feel like we do have to sweep this weekend, and I'm not the type of person who usually talks in terms of sweeps," Hilltopper coach Joel

Murrie said. "I usually like to think in terms of games, innings and pitches. But what it comes down to is that we have to play four good days of baseball."



MURRIE

The top three teams in the conference — South Alabama, New Orleans and Arkansas State — appear to have locks on tournament berths, but the picture clouds further down in the standings.

Southwestern Louisiana is in fourth at 11-10 and is followed by Jacksonville and Lamar (10-11).

Among those trying to play their way into the tournament during the next two weekends are Texas-Pan American (8-12), Arkansas-Little Rock (7-12), Western and Louisiana Tech (5-15).

For Western to catch sixth-place

Lamar, it would have to make up 3½ games with six to go and move past Texas-Pan American and Arkansas-Little Rock.

Lamar is at cellar-dweller Louisiana Tech this weekend and travels to Arkansas-Little Rock next weekend.

With Lamar's less-than-difficult schedule, Western's best chance may be to knock Jacksonville out of the tournament. The Dolphins, picked to finish second in the preseason coaches' poll, have struggled against a tough schedule this season. Seven of their losses have come against teams ranked in the top 30 in the nation.

If Western could play itself into contention this weekend, the Hilltoppers would hold the upper hand over the Dolphins scheduled next weekend. Western will host Texas-Pan American while Jacksonville must travel to New Orleans.

Murrie said Western may hold the upper hand this weekend.

"I don't think they've played up to the level they expected to in the league," Murrie said. "I think coach (Terry) Alexander though he was going to have the best team he has ever had there this season, so I think there's a little bit of disappointment there. Maybe we're catching them at a time when they're not fully believing in themselves."

Murrie will put his faith in three freshmen this weekend. T.J. Freeman (1-1, 4.76 ERA), Josh Novoliney (3-5, 6.79) and Stephen Stenle (6-2, 3.96) will receive starting nods.

"I think with those three guys starting, it really helps us with our bullpen," Murrie said. "That gives us (Joe) Penneritz, (Brian) Smith and (Christian) Blackburn all coming out of the bullpen. Those three guys all have a lot of experience."

The Dolphins will likely counter with Eddie Sordo (8-5, 3.86), John Byrd (2-3, 4.30) and Wade Taylor (3-4, 4.53). Sordo is one of the conference's aces, ranking first in com-

plete games, second in wins and innings pitched, third in strikeouts and eighth in ERA.

Thursday's game

Middle Tennessee State broke open a three-all tie with two runs in the fifth and scored five in the sixth to secure a 10-5 win over Western in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

The Blue Raiders (27-21) scored their two fifth-inning runs off reliever Chad Mead, who fell to 1-1 with the loss. Western used seven pitchers in the contest.

The Hilltoppers were held to five singles by four Middle Tennessee State pitchers. Dan Grice had a single and two RBI for the Hilltoppers.

Western 000 030 200- 5 6 1
Middle Tennessee 010 225 000-10 12 0
WP — Kirby (4-4), LP — Mead (1-1), 2B — Beddes, Snellgrove, Snyder (Middle Tennessee), HR — Thompson (Middle Tennessee).

Sun Belt standings

	Conf.	Overall
South Alabama	17-4	31-13
New Orleans	15-6	34-14
Arkansas State	13-8	28-19
SV Louisiana	11-10	21-27
Jacksonville	10-10	21-24
Lamar	10-11	24-21
Texas-Pan American	8-12	21-25
Arkansas-Little Rock	7-12	26-18
Western Kentucky	6-14	22-23
Louisiana Tech	6-15	18-27

SATURDAY

Western Kentucky at Jacksonville (DH), 12:30 p.m.	Arkansas-Little Rock at South Alabama (DH), 1 p.m.
Arkansas State at SV Louisiana (DH), 1 p.m.	Lamar at Louisiana Tech (DH), 2 p.m.
New Orleans at Texas-Pan American (DH), 4 p.m.	

SUNDAY

Western Kentucky at Jacksonville, 12:30 p.m.	Arkansas-Little Rock at South Alabama, 1 p.m.
Arkansas State at SV Louisiana, 1 p.m.	New Orleans at Texas-Pan American, 1 p.m.

Novotney's relief helps WKU gain split

By the Daily News 4-28-96

Freshman Josh Novotney pitched 4 2/3 innings of scoreless relief, and Western Kentucky University rallied past homestanding Jacksonville for a 12-5 win in the second game of a doubleheader Saturday.

With the win, the Hilltoppers gained a split in the series with their Sun Belt Conference foe. The Dolphins took the first game 8-6.

In the nightcap, Jacksonville (22-25, 11-11 Sun Belt) jumped out to a 5-2 lead against Western starter and Bowling Green High School graduate T.J. Freeman. Novotney

(4-5) relieved Freeman with one out in the third and allowed two hits and struck out five during his stint.

Western (23-24, 7-15) took the lead for good in the fourth. Erick Rosa reached on an error by third baseman Chad Roney to open the inning and scored on Scott Flynn's two-out double. Chad Chabala singled Flynn home and later scored on a single by Matt Idlett. Josh Patton singled Idlett home to give Western a 6-5 lead.

Western got three runs in both the sixth and seventh innings to secure

the win.

Shannon McKenzie finished 3-for-5 with two runs and an RBI. Dan Grice was 2-for-3 with four RBI.

In the opener, Western blew a 6-1 lead in the final three innings.

Freshman Stephen Stemple held the Dolphins at bay until the seventh. The big blow was a two-run home run by catcher Chad Roney that cut the Hilltopper lead to 6-5.

In the eighth, Jacksonville scored three runs off Western reliever Brian Smith (7-4) to get the win.

Idlett led Western at the plate with a 3-for-4 performance that in-

cluded three runs and two RBI. McKenzie and C.J. Martin both added two hits.

The two teams will finish their series today at 12:30 p.m.

GAME ONE

Western 100 120 200- 6 9 1
Jacksonville 001 000 43x- 8 13 0
WP - Ryan DeakCrosse (1-0). LP - Brian Smith (7-4).
2B - Osbeck, Samples, Wood (Jacksonville). HR - Idlett, Martin (Western). Roney (Jacksonville).

GAME TWO

Western 200 433 0-12 15 2
Jacksonville 104 000 0- 5 8 5
WP - Josh Novotney (4-5). LP - Eddie Sordb (8-6). 2B - Freeman, Grice (Western). Hamilton, Wood (Jacksonville).

Novotney's pitching keeps Western alive for tourney berth

By the Daily News

His team in need of a win to stay alive for a Sun Belt Conference Tournament berth, Western Kentucky University pitcher Josh Novotney came through again Sunday in Jacksonville, Fla.

A day after pitching 4 2/3 innings of scoreless relief in Western's 12-5 win over Jacksonville in the second game of Saturday's doubleheader, Novotney got the starting nod in Sunday's contest.

Novotney pitched 6 2/3 scoreless innings Sunday, allowing six hits and three walks and striking out two as the Hilltoppers stayed alive for a conference tournament berth with a 11-1 win.

Novotney, a freshman from Streator, Ill., has a string of 19 1/3 scoreless innings pitched.

Western (24-24 overall, 8-15 Sun Belt) built an 8-0 lead after 7 1/2 innings before the Dolphins (22-26, 11-12) scored an unearned run in the eighth off Western reliever Joe Penert.

Josh Patton led Western at the plate with four singles and two RBI. Chad Chabala and C.J. Martin both knocked three hits, and Shannon McKenzie added three RBI.

Western is tied for ninth place in the Sun Belt with Louisiana Tech with one weekend of conference play remaining. The top six teams in the conference advance to the Sun Belt Tournament, which will be played May 15-18 at either South Alabama or New Orleans.

South Alabama, New Orleans, Arkansas State and Southwestern Louisiana have all clinched berths.

Jacksonville (11-12) and Lamar (10-14) are fifth and sixth respectively in the conference, but Texas-Pan American (9-14), Arkansas-Little Rock (8-14), Western and Louisiana Tech (8-15) all have a chance of getting into the tournament after this weekend's play.

Western will host Texas-Pan American in a single game Friday at 6 p.m. and in a doubleheader Saturday beginning at 2 p.m.

Western 140 000 123-11 18 2
Jacksonville 000 000 010-1 8 3
WP — Josh Novotney (5-5), LP — Wade Taylor (3-5), 2B — Martin (2), McKenzie (Western); Hamilton (Jacksonville).

Schedule changes

Western's game at Kentucky, originally scheduled for Wednesday, has been rescheduled for May 8 at 11 a.m. Also, Western's game with Tennessee Tech that was rained out March 6 will be played May 6 at 2:30 p.m. at Tennessee Tech.

Sun Belt standings

	Conf.	Overall
South Alabama	19- 5	33-14
New Orleans	17- 7	36-15
Arkansas State	14-10	29-21
SW Louisiana	13-11	23-28
Jacksonville	11-12	22-26
Lamar	10-14	24-24
Texas-Pan American	9-14	22-27
Arkansas-Little Rock	8-14	27-20
Western Kentucky	8-15	24-24
Louisiana Tech	8-15	21-27

SATURDAY

Jacksonville 8, Western Kentucky 6, game one
Western Kentucky 12, Jacksonville 5, game two
South Alabama 15, Arkansas-Little Rock 3, game one
Arkansas-Little Rock 6, South Alabama 3, game two
Southwestern Louisiana 4, Arkansas State 2, game one
Arkansas State 6, Southwestern Louisiana 1, game two
Texas Pan-American 14, New Orleans 10, game one
New Orleans 3, Texas-Pan American 1, game two
Louisiana Tech 5, Lamar 4, game one
Louisiana Tech 6, Lamar 3, game two

SUNDAY

Western Kentucky 11, Jacksonville 1
South Alabama 10, Arkansas-Little Rock 4
Southwestern Louisiana 11, Arkansas State 1
New Orleans 4, Texas-Pan American 1
Louisiana Tech 12, Lamar 8

TUESDAY

Arkansas State at Murray State, 3 p.m.
South Alabama at Southeastern Louisiana, 6:30 p.m.
Houston at Lamar, 7 p.m.
Southwestern Louisiana at Northwestern State, 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

South Alabama at Nicholls State, 3 p.m.
Southwest Texas State at Lamar (DH), 5 p.m.
McNeese State at Louisiana Tech, 7 p.m.
Southeastern Louisiana at New Orleans, 7 p.m.
Southwestern Louisiana at Northeast Louisiana, 7 p.m.

THURSDAY

New Orleans at Southeastern Louisiana, 6:30 p.m.

FRIDAY

Texas-Pan American at Western Kentucky, 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 4

Lamar at Arkansas-Little Rock (DH), 1 p.m.
Jacksonville at New Orleans (DH), 1 p.m.
Louisiana Tech at Southwestern Louisiana (DH), 1 p.m.
Texas-Pan American at Western Kentucky (DH), 1 p.m.
South Alabama at Arkansas State (DH), 4 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 5

Lamar at Arkansas-Little Rock, 1 p.m.
South Alabama at Arkansas State, 1 p.m.
Jacksonville at New Orleans, 1 p.m.
Louisiana Tech at Southwestern Louisiana, 1 p.m.
End Sun Belt Conference regular-season play



**Jason
Frakes**
Daily News
Sports Writer

WKU baseball: Novotney rewards Murrie's gamble

It wasn't the hard beds or any loud party down the hall that kept Western Kentucky University coach Joel Murrie awake Saturday night in his hotel room in Jacksonville, Fla.

Instead, Murrie had to ponder what to do with his freshman pitcher Josh Novotney, who had just hurled 4 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings of scoreless relief in a 12-5 win over Jacksonville in the second game of a doubleheader.

Novotney was scheduled to start Sunday's game with Jacksonville, a game that the Hilltoppers had to win to stay alive for a Sun Belt Conference Tournament berth.

But risk it after Novotney had thrown 60 pitches on Saturday?

"On Saturday night, I wrestled with what to do for a long time," Murrie said. "I didn't want to take a start away from him because of a decision I had made on Saturday. He had earned the right to start on Sunday."

Murrie was rewarded handsomely for his gutsy call. Novotney went out and pitched 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings of scoreless ball Sunday, and the Hilltoppers crushed the Dolphins 11-1 to remain alive for a tournament bid.

Novotney extended his scoreless streak to 19 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings and was named the Sun Belt's Pitcher of the Week on Monday afternoon. He threw 96 pitches Sunday before he began to tire with two outs in the seventh.

With Western leading 6-0, Novotney gave up a single and then ran the count to 2-0 on the next batter.

Murrie went to the bullpen.

"We thought maybe he'd throw 30 to 35 pitches and get us three innings and we'd piecemeal it after that," Murrie said. "After he went 2-0, I decided to take him out because I didn't want him to make a mistake that might get them back in the game."

"You have to give Josh a lot of credit. It takes a lot for a freshman to go out there and do what he did."

And what Novotney did was give the Hilltoppers a chance to advance to the Sun Belt Tournament. The top six teams in the final conference standings advance to the tournament, which will be held May 16-19 at either South Alabama or New Orleans.

With one weekend of conference play left, Western is tied for ninth with Louisiana Tech at 8-15. Four teams are already in, and the remaining six are fighting for the final two spots. Western trails sixth-place Lamar by 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ games.

The Hilltoppers will host seventh-place Texas-Pan American in a three-game series this weekend. Lamar will battle eighth-place Arkansas-Little Rock.

With a Western sweep and a little help, the Hilltoppers could advance to postseason play for the first time since 1992.

Stemle gets start as Toppers vie for SBC journey

By JASON FRANKS
The Daily News 5-3-96

Freshman Stephen Stemle will have no big-college-game experiences to draw on when he takes the mound tonight at Nick Denes Field.

Stemle will find solace in a successful high school career.

"We played in about four different championship games in high school, and I was the one that always got to pitch in those," Stemle said. "I want to pitch in these kind of situations. I wouldn't have it any other way."

Stemle (6-2, 4.19 ERA) will not be pitching in a championship game tonight, but it may be the biggest game Western Kentucky University's baseball team has played in quite a while. The Hilltoppers host

Texas-Pan American (22-27, 9-14 Sun Belt Conference) tonight at 6 to kick off a three-game series this weekend.

The teams will meet again Saturday in a doubleheader starting at 1 p.m.

After winning two of three at Jacksonville last weekend, the Hilltoppers (24-24, 8-15) stayed alive for a berth in the Sun Belt Tournament, which will be played May 15-18 at either South Alabama or New Orleans.

The top six teams in the final regular-season standings advance to the tournament. South Alabama, New Orleans, Arkansas State and Southwestern Louisiana have all clinched bids.

With one weekend of conference

play remaining, the rest is rather cloudy.

Jacksonville (11-12) and Lamar (10-14) hold the fifth and sixth spots, but the remaining four teams all have a chance to make the tournament. Texas-Pan American ranks seventh in the conference followed by Arkansas-Little Rock (8-14), Western and Louisiana Tech (8-15). The bottom six teams in the conference are separated by three games.

Western can guarantee itself a spot in the tournament if it sweeps Texas-Pan American and Jacksonville loses all three games at second-place New Orleans (17-7). Western holds tiebreaker advantages with Jacksonville and Louisiana Tech.

"I'd much rather be one of the four already in, but if you look at the situation we're in it's not all that bad," Hilltopper coach Joel Murrie said.

Western has not advanced to the Sun Belt Tournament since 1992, when it finished 1-2 in the tourney. In 1993, Western lost a coin toss and missed the tournament. The last two seasons, Western has finished well out of the race.

Josh Patton, one of two three-year Hilltoppers, said team unity has given Western this opportunity.

"This feels really good," Patton said. "I've worked hard for three years, and I know the other guys have worked hard this year, too. It seems we all have a common goal this year instead of some guys wor-

rying about something else. We have one goal, and that's to play in the conference tournament."

Western will likely face one of the conference's top pitchers this weekend in Mike Karow. The foot-2 lefty ranks third in the conference with a 3.16 ERA and is 7-1 with five complete games this season. Karow's 72 strikeouts are fifth in the Sun Belt, and opponent are hitting a paltry .247 against him.

Murrie finds confidence in recent success and a year's worth of improvement.

"At this point, I really think we're going to go out and get a win (tonight)," Murrie said. "Not take anything away from Texas-Pan American, but I just have this feeling that we're going to win."

Sun Belt standings

	Conf.	Overall
South Alabama	19-5	35-14
New Orleans	17-7	37-16
Arkansas State	14-10	29-22
SW Louisiana	13-11	23-30
Jacksonville	11-12	22-26
Lamar	10-14	25-26
Texas-Pan American	9-14	22-27
Arkansas-Little Rock	8-14	27-21
Western Kentucky	8-15	24-24
Louisiana Tech	8-15	21-28

*—clinched spot in Sun Belt Tournament

TODAY

Texas-Pan American at Western Kentucky, 6 p.m.

SATURDAY

Lamar at Arkansas-Little Rock (DH), 1 p.m.

Jacksonville at New Orleans (DH), 1 p.m.

Texas-Pan American at Western Kentucky (DH), 1 p.m.

South Alabama at Arkansas State (DH), 4 p.m.

Louisiana Tech at Southwestern Louisiana (DH), 4 p.m.

SUNDAY

Lamar at Arkansas-Little Rock, 1 p.m.

South Alabama at Arkansas State, 1 p.m.

Jacksonville at New Orleans, 1 p.m.

Louisiana Tech at Southwestern Louisiana, 1 p.m.

End Sun Belt Conference regular-season play

Toppers drop two of three to UTPA

By the Daily News 5-5-96

A day after Texas-Pan American eliminated it from Sun Belt Conference Tournament contention, Western Kentucky University's baseball team split a doubleheader with the Broncos at Nick Denes Field on Saturday.

Texas-Pan American beat Western 5-4 on Friday to end the Hilltoppers' hopes of advancing to the Sun Belt Tournament for the first time since 1992.

In Saturday's opener, Western freshman Josh Novotney extended his consecutive scoreless innings streak to 25½ innings before surrendering a run in the top of the seventh. Western held a 3-1 lead at the time and went on to win by the same score.

Novotney improved to 6-5 with the complete-game victory, allowing five hits and striking out three. Novotney did not walk anyone. His scoreless innings streak fell 1½ innings shy of the Sun Belt Conference record of 27½ innings set by Jacksonville's John Wylie in 1990 and Lamar's Phil Brassingham in 1993.

Western's C.J. Martin hit his 15th home run of the year in the sixth inning to give Western a 3-1 lead. Martin finished 2-for-4 with two runs scored.

In the nightcap, Texas-Pan American took a 3-2 lead in the seventh before the Hilltoppers forced extra innings with a run in the bottom of the inning when Erick Rosa was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded and two outs.

The Broncos finally took the lead in the top of the tenth and held Western scoreless in the bottom of the inning to win the series 2-1.

In Friday's game, Texas-Pan American took a 5-0 lead off Western starter Stephen Stemle before the Hilltoppers rallied late.

Western got two runs in the seventh on a two-run home run by Matt Idlett and cut the lead to 5-3 when Martin homered in the eighth.

In the ninth, the Hilltoppers got runners on first and third with two outs. Shannon McKenzie hit a shot that hit high off the left-center field wall to score Scott

Flynn from third. Idlett was held at third, and McKenzie reached second.

But Josh Patton grounded out to second base to end the Hilltopper rally and their hopes for a postseason berth.

Texas-Pan American (24-28, 11-15) awaits the results of today's final slate of Sun Belt regular-season games to find out if it will advance to the Sun Belt Tournament.

Western (25-26, 9-17) will travel to Tennessee Tech on Monday for a 2:30 p.m.

SATURDAY

GAME ONE

Texas-Pan American 000 000 100— 1 5 3
Western 100 101 00x— 3 6 0
WP — Josh Novotney (6-5). LP — Mike Karow (7-4). 2B — Autry, Peters, Redden (Texas-Pan American). HR — Martin (Western).

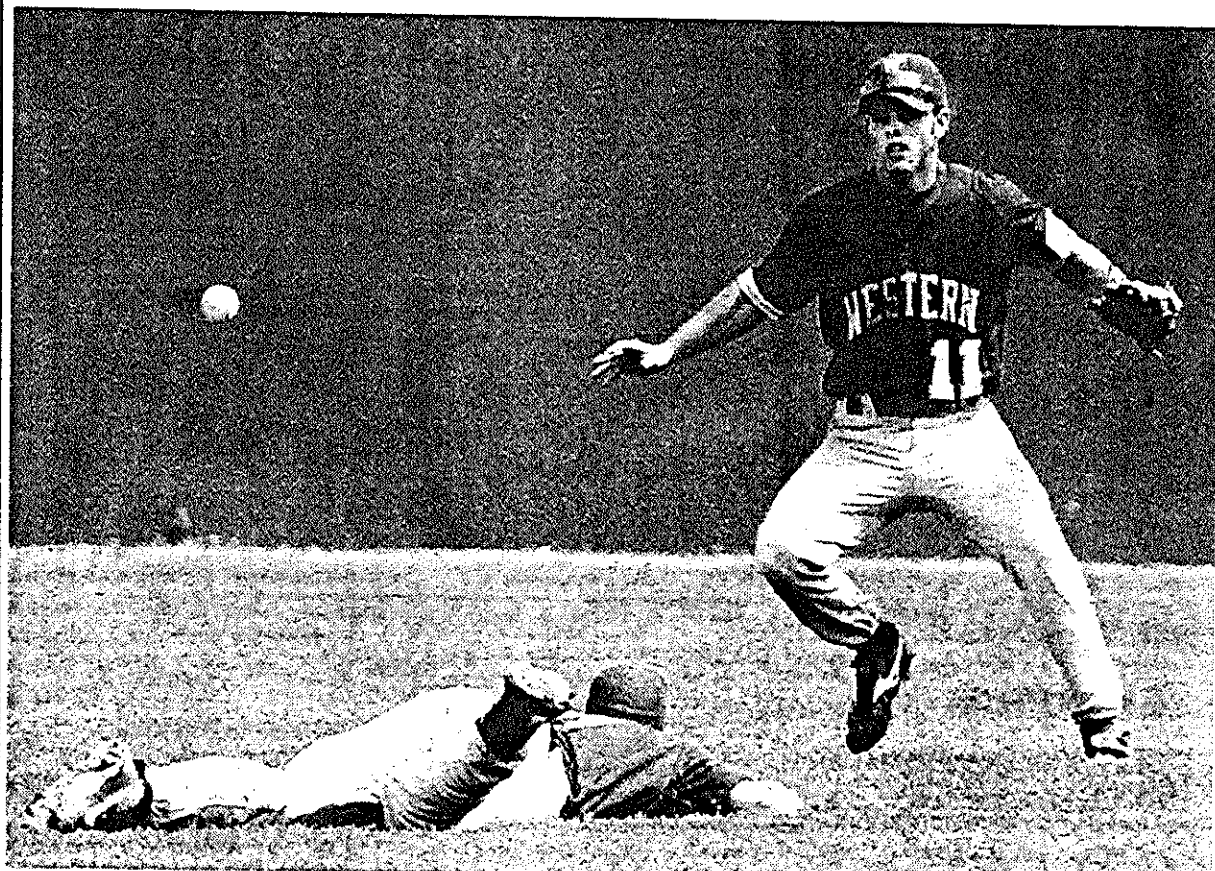
GAME TWO

Texas-Pan American ... 200 000 100 1— 4 11 0
Western 000 101 100 0— 3 13 0
WP — Rick Navarro (2-3). LP — Brian Smith (7-5). 2B — Jeff Moore, Peters, Tosch (Texas-Pan American); Freeman, McKenzie, Patton (Western).

FRIDAY

Texas-Pan American 010 310 000— 5 6 0
Western 000 000 211— 4 11 2
WP — Kiko Trevino (6-4). LP — Stephen Stemle (6-3). Save — Rick Navarro (3). 2B — Siskowski (Texas-Pan American); McKenzie 2, Rosa (Western). 3B — Phillips (Texas-Pan American). HR — Martin, Idlett (Western).

VF - Baseball 1996



5-5-96 Daily News/Wales Hunter

WESTERN KENTUCKY shortstop Scott Flynn dives to the ground as left fielder Matt Idlett waits to field the ball during the first game of Saturday's dou-

bleheader at Nick Denes Field. Western won the first game 3-1 but dropped the nightcap 4-3 in 10 innings. The Hilltoppers travel to Tennessee Tech on Monday.

DW
MONDAY, MAY 6, 1996

Sun Belt baseball tourney seeds set; Hilltoppers out

By the Daily News

While Western Kentucky University's baseball team could not take advantage of its opportunity this weekend to sneak into the Sun Belt Conference Tournament, Texas-Pan American did.

After taking two of three from the Hilltoppers at Nick Denes Field, the Broncs captured the No. 6 spot in next week's Sun Belt Tournament in Mobile, Ala.

South Alabama (22-5 Sun Belt, No. 1 seed), New Orleans (198, No. 2), Southwestern Louisiana

(15-12, No. 3), Arkansas State (14-13, No. 4), Jacksonville (12-14, No. 5) and Texas-Pan American (11-15, No. 6) will compete in the tournament May 15-18 at South Alabama.

The Hilltoppers (25-26, 9-17) finished tied for ninth with Louisiana Tech. Had the Hilltoppers swept Texas-Pan American over the weekend, they would have qualified for the tournament.

Western was scheduled to play at Tennessee Tech today at 2:30 p.m.

Baseball Toppers get season sweep of Kentucky, 7-5

Baseball

WESTERN 7
KENTUCKY 5

5-9-96
DN

LEXINGTON — Western Kentucky University's baseball team evened its record at 26-26 Wednesday with a 7-5 win at the University of Kentucky.

Western swept the season series with the Wildcats, beating them 17-16 on April 1 in Bowling Green.

Erick Rosa's two-run single in the first and Matt Idlett's three-run home run in the second helped the Hilltoppers build a 5-0 lead after

1½ innings.

Idlett added his second home run of the game and his ninth of the season in the fifth to put Western ahead 6-1.

C.J. Martin hit his team-leading 16th home run in the eighth to round out Western's scoring.

Idlett finished 2-for-3 with four

RBI and three runs scored. Shannon McKenzie added two hits for the Hilltoppers.

Freshman pitcher Josh Novotney improved to 7-5 with the win, allowing one run and striking out two batters in four innings of work. Brian Smith picked up his third save of the season.

Western closes its season this weekend, hosting Wofford in a three-game series that begins with a single game Friday at 6 p.m. The teams will play a doubleheader

Saturday beginning at 4 p.m. Western must win two of three to assure its first winning season since 1993.

Western 230 010 010— 7 8 3
Kentucky 000 100 211— 5 9 2
WP — Novotney (7-5). LP — Acuff (6-5). Save — Smith
(3). 2B — McKenzie (Western); Bendix, Green, Miller (Kentucky). HR — Martin, Idlett (2) (Western); Bendix, Hayes, Tedesco (Kentucky).

UK pounds South Carolina 6-1 to guarantee SEC tourney spot

From Special Dispatches 5-12-96

CJ

The University of Kentucky baseball team defeated visiting South Carolina 6-1 yesterday to secure a spot in the Southeastern Conference Tournament.

Freshman left-hander Eric Bishop (5-2) threw a four-hitter in his first SEC start. He struck out a career-high eight while walking five.

The Wildcats (31-22) will try to sweep the Gamecocks (25-28) at 2 p.m. today.

The SEC Tournament will start Wednesday in Birmingham, Ala.

Morehead State beat Eastern Kentucky 4-2 to eliminate the Colonels (21-32) from the Ohio Valley Conference Tournament in Clarksville, Tenn.

The Eagles (27-28) got a complete-game effort from Troy Young (6-3). He scattered two hits and gave up just one earned run.

Western Kentucky (29-26) finished its season by sweeping a doubleheader against visiting Wofford.

The Hilltoppers won the first game 7-3 behind a two-run home run by senior Shannon McKenzie. Western pounded Wofford (9-35) 14-0 in the second game.

It's the first time since 1993 that the Hilltoppers finished above .500.

Host Indiana University swept a doubleheader against Purdue to set a school mark for Big Ten victories.

The two victories improved the surging Hoosiers to 37-15 and 16-8 in the Big Ten. They have won 11 straight games and are in second place in the league behind Penn State. The top four teams will qualify for the conference tourney. IU will end the regular season today with a doubleheader against Purdue (21-30-1, 8-17).

Golf: UK is in 11th place after the second round of the SEC Tournament at the Old Overton Golf Club in Birmingham. Florida (569) has a three-

AROUND KENTUCKIANA

stroke lead over Mississippi State and Arkansas. The Cats are 46 shots off the Gators' pace.

Graham Davidson of Mississippi State leads the 60-golfer field. He followed up his opening 5-under-par 66 with a 71. UK's Grover Justice shot a 72 and is tied for 42nd.

UK's women's team shot a 342 in the NCAA East Regional in Auburn, Ala., to finish 19th with a 995 total. Duke won with a 905.

UK senior Kirsten Krogsrud finished tied for 21st after an 82 in the final round.

Track: UK senior Lamonte Vaughn finished first in the men's 800 meters at the Billy Hayes Invitational at IU. Vaughn's time of 1 minute, 50.99 seconds was .65 seconds faster than Ohio State's Winston Tidewell.

UK senior Ronnie Williams finished third in the 200 meters in 21.40.

On the women's side, the UK 4 x 400 relay team won in 3:36.71.

Borg, Gomez advance in Champions tennis

ROCKVILLE, Md. (AP) — Bjorn Borg and Andres Gomez won yesterday to advance to the semifinals of the \$150,000 Corel Champions men's over-35 tennis tournament.

Borg, seeded third in the 12-man field, defeated Guillermo Vilas 6-2, 6-4 and will meet Gomez in a semifinal match tonight. Tonight's other semifinal will pit No. 4 Johan Kriek against John Lloyd.

Kriek advanced with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Mansour Bahrami, while Lloyd moved on when No. 1 seed Jimmy Connors was forced to retire.

WKU baseball team finishes 29-26

By the Daily News

Western Kentucky University's baseball team assured its first winning season since 1993 in the opener, then completed a three-game sweep of Wofford College in the nightcap of a doubleheader Saturday at Nick Denes Field.

Western finished its season 29-26, its first winning season since the 1993 squad finished 30-22 and missed out on the Sun Belt Conference Tournament after a coin toss. The Hilltoppers did not qualify for the Sun Belt Tournament this season and have not since 1992.

Only the top six teams in the 10-team Sun Belt qualify for the league's tournament.

In Saturday's opener, Western built a 4-0 lead after three innings and held on for a 7-3 victory. Both games of Saturday's doubleheader went seven innings.

Wofford cut Western's lead to 4-3 with single runs in the fourth, fifth and sixth, but the Hilltoppers put the

game away with three in the sixth behind Dan Grice's RBI double and Shannon McKenzie's two-run home run.

Western's Christian Blackburn improved to 3-2 while pitching six innings. Blackburn allowed all three Wofford runs (two earned) and six hits while striking out three batters. Joe Pennerz struck out two batters in the seventh.

Grice, Chad Chabala and Matt Idlett led Western's 11-hit barrage with two hits apiece. McKenzie knocked in three runs, and Grice added two RBI.

In the nightcap, three Hilltopper pitchers combined to shut out Wofford and Western rolled 14-0.

Josh Novotney (8-5) allowed three hits and struck out two in five innings of work. Mike Robison and Brian Smith both pitched one inning of scoreless relief.

Western pounded 14 hits and was tied by Josh Patton's 4-for-4 performance. Patton knocked a triple, a

home run and added four RBI.

Idlett was 3-for-4 with four RBI and a home run. Chabala and McKenzie both added two hits. Bowling Green High School graduate T.J. Freeman hit a solo home run.

Friday's game

Down 5-0 after 3½ innings, Western scored 13 runs in its final four at-bats and beat Wofford 13-5.

Wofford starting pitcher Anthony Salley held the Hilltoppers hitless until McKenzie's RBI single with two outs in the fifth scored Chabala to cut the Wofford lead to 5-1.

Western took the lead for good in the sixth with six runs. Wofford pitchers walked in three runs, Scott Flynn's double-play grounder scored another and McKenzie's two-run home run gave Western a 7-5 lead.

Western scored five in the seventh aided by left fielder Rad

Deaton's misplay of a C.J. Martin fly ball that allowed three runs to score.

McKenzie finished with two hits and three RBI, and Grice knocked in two runs.

Robison picked up his first win of the season with one inning of scoreless relief.

Smith pitched three innings of scoreless relief to pick up his fourth save of the season.

SATURDAY

GAME ONE

Wofford 000 111 0- 3 6 1
Western 112 003 x- 7 11 1
WP - Blackburn (3-2), LP - Korporens (5-6), 2B - Grice, Idlett (Western), 3B - Pittman (Wofford), Martin (Western), HR - Martin (Wofford), McKenzie (Western).

GAME TWO

Wofford 000 000 0- 0 5 1
Western 332 411 x-14 14 0
WP - Novotney (8-5), LP - Hayes (0-4), 2B - Chabala, Rosa (Western), 3B - Patton (Western), HR - Freeman, Idlett, Patton (Western).

FRIDAY

Wofford 010 400 000- 5 8 3
Western 000 016 51x-13 7 0
WP - Robison (1-0), LP - Hayes (0-3), Save - Smith (4), 2B - Jacques, Martin (Wofford), Freeman (Western), 3B - Chabala (Western), HR - Deaton (Wofford), McKenzie (Western).

Sun Belt honors 3 Hilltoppers

By the Daily News 5-14-96

Western Kentucky University baseball players Matt Idlett, C.J. Martin and Josh Patton have been honored by the Sun Belt Conference.

Idlett, an infielder and outfielder from Cincinnati, Ohio, was named the conference's Freshman of the Year. Idlett hit .339 with 10 home runs and 41 RBI. He scored 58 runs, and his five triples ranked second in the conference.

Idlett also was named Sun Belt player of the week, batting .412 and hitting three home runs with nine RBI as Western went 4-0 last week.

Martin made the Sun Belt's all-conference first team as an outfielder. Martin led Western in batting average (.383), home runs (16), doubles (17), RBI (62) and slugging percentage (.761).

Patton was a second-team all-conference selection. Patton's .346

batting average ranked third on the team.

WKU baseball team signs two All-Americans

By the Daily News 5-23-96

Western Kentucky University's baseball team has signed two 1996 preseason All-Americans.

Lorenzo Ferguson, a senior pitcher/first baseman at St. Martin DePorres High School in West Bloomfield, Mich., was listed among Collegiate Baseball's "Top Prep Players" in the nation, and Mizuno dubbed him a preseason All-American.

The 6-foot-2, 200-pound Ferguson chose Western over Houston, Western Michigan, Il-

linois and Michigan State.

As of May 8, Ferguson was hitting .547 and was 5-2 on the mound with five saves and a 1.50 ERA. As a junior, Ferguson led his team to a 30-5 record and a Catholic League championship. He batted .494 with 13 home runs and 40 RBI and stole 40 bases.

Israel "Izzy" Santiago, a senior shortstop at St. Peter Chanel High School in Seven Hills, Ohio, was also a "Top Prep Player" pick by Collegiate

Baseball and a Mizuno preseason All-American.

As a junior, Santiago hit .543 with 13 doubles, 19 RBI and 32 runs in 24 games. He chose Western over Ohio State, Stetson, Bowling Green and Kent State.

Ferguson and Santiago become the fourth and fifth Western signees for the 1997 season, joining Tim Currens (6-3, OF/P, Bowling Green), Ryan Ferrell (6-3, P, Philpot) and Jeff Vance (6-1, P, Greenwood, Ind.).

Pitcher Sandowski to play baseball at WKU

By the Daily News

6-4-90

Right-handed pitcher Kevin Sandowski, 15-4 in his final two years at Joliet (Ill.) Catholic High School, has signed to play his college baseball at Western Kentucky University.

"I chose Western because it's not too small and not too big," he said.

"Western also gave me a chance to start right away and contribute to the team early."

Sandowski's fastball has been clocked at 89 mph. He was 6-4 with 105 strikeouts as a senior, and the backstop remained full during Joliet Catholic's playoff games.

"There were so many scouts on hand, it was unbelievable," Joliet Catholic coach Joe Rodeghero said.

Sandowski considered offers from Texas A&M and Illinois, according to a Western news release. He and

projects to go early in the amateur Major League Baseball Draft this week.

"He is tough mentally and mature for an 18-year-old," Rodeghero said. "He has a good mound presence and knows what he has to do to be successful."

Western coach Joel Murrie expects Sandowski to join the starting rotation as a freshman.

"I really feel like we are on track to again place immediate-impact pitching into the program like we did last year with our freshman class," Murrie said.

Sandowski joins a Western recruiting class that includes Mizuno preseson all-Americans Lorenzo Ferguson (outfielder, right-handed pitcher) from West Bloomfield, Mich., and Izzy Santiago (shortstop) from Seven Hills,

Ohio.

Also signed are former Warren Central High School outfielder/pitcher Tim Currens, Daviess County right-handed pitcher Ryan Ferrell, Greenwood (Ind.) left-handed pitcher Jeff Vance, and North Hardin pitcher/shortstop Crad Jagers. Jagers will also be a quarterback for Western's football team.

Wilson returns to WKU

Former Western women's basketball player Trina Wilson will join the Lady Topper coaching staff as an administrative assistant, the school announced Monday.

Wilson played at Western from 1989-93, then played professionally in Turkey and France. She spent the last several months working for the Women's Sports Foundation in East Meadow, N.Y.

Since returning to her native New York in April of 1995, Wilson said she has tried to break into coaching.

"I'm happy here," she said. "Western is my second home."

"Having played here gives me the opportunity to give something back to the program. I know with the current state of the program, this opportunity will be good for me."

Wilson will handle travel and other administrative duties but will not have on-the-floor duties.

While a player at Western, she averaged 4.4 points and 3.1 rebounds. She was a regular contributor on the Lady Toppers' 1992 NCAA runner-up team.

HAF notes

— The Hilltopper Athletic Foundation's Nashville chapter will host a golf scramble June 24 at Hermit-

age Golf Course in Old Hickory, Tenn. The annual event is a benefit for Western athletics.

The four-player scramble will start with 11:30 a.m. registration followed by lunch at noon and a shotgun tee-off at 1:30 p.m.

The entry fee for individuals is \$85. For more information, call the HAF at 745-5321.

— The Louisville HAF chapter will host its second-annual cookout June 25 at 5:30 p.m. at the Brewery on Baxter Avenue. Big Red, Western coaches and staff will be on hand. Burgers, brats and beans will be served, and there will be a cash bar. For more information, call Chuck Will (502-267-7371), Johnny Graham (502-423-8188), Jan West (502-339-6423) or Cindi Stone (502-425-7619).

Three of Murrie's signees drafted

By the Daily News 6-14-96

With the results of last week's amateur baseball draft now public, Western Kentucky University baseball coach Joel Murrie's recruiting class looks formidable.

Three of Murrie's signees were taken in the draft.

Lorenzo Ferguson, an outfielder/pitcher from West Bloomfield, Mich., was taken in the 13th round by Toronto. Kevin Sadowski, a pitcher from Joliet (Ill.) Catholic High School, went in the 21st round by the Chicago White Sox. Ryan Ferrell, a pitcher from Daviess County High School, got the call in the 49th round from Minnesota.

Murrie said he expects all three to attend Western in the fall.

Sources close to the program said Sadowski was contacted by two clubs during the first three rounds of the draft but turned them down because he was committed to attending school. Sadowski was 6-4 with a 2.10 ERA and 105 strikeouts as a senior at Joliet Catholic and was recruited by Texas A&M and Illinois. His fastball has been clocked at 89 mph.

Tim Currens, a 1994 Warren Central High School graduate and a Western signee, was not drafted after being taken by the Chicago Cubs in last year's draft. Clubs lose the rights to a player after one year.

"Things just didn't work out with (Chicago)," said Currens, a pitcher/outfielder. "They had a whole lot of outfielders."

Currens, who played two seasons at Vol State Community College in Nashville, said he will attend a Milwaukee Brewers tryout camp at Bowling Green High School on Tuesday.

"Hopefully, I'll get picked up there," Currens said.

WKU lands PRP outfielder

◌ Matt Fox, who played left field for Pleasure Ridge Park's state championship baseball team last spring, has signed with Western Kentucky University, PRP coach Bill Miller said.

Fox batted .420 with 45 RBIs and five homers as a junior last season. Fox, who has a 4.0 grade-point average, picked Western over Louisville, Morehead and Murray State. 1-20-76